UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY, SYDNEY

# A critical investigation into the way in which art works demonstrate and contribute to the construction and changing perceptions of national identity in Australia as reflected in the public collections and institutions responsible for collecting and displaying these art works

**Alison M.C. Quinn**

**October 2010**

This thesis discusses the means by which the collection and exhibition of art works, primarily by Australian public collections and institutions, reflect and construct national identity, whether consciously or unconsciously. Cultural history and 'national identity' have become areas of particular interest in the available literature as there has been a significant re-evaluation of Australian history in recognition of the fact that a single linear account of history no longer provides an accurate version of the Australian story. This shift has been largely due to societal and political changes in the Australian communities which have facilitate the recognition of diverse groups and the telling of their own stories. This account looks at five major areas of interest – the role of museums, landscape, portraiture, Indigenous art and contemporary art in Australia. Art museums, their acquisition, exhibiting and publication policies and practices, clearly contribute in some formative way, to the images and dialogues around how Australians see themselves domestically and internationally, and to the image projected overseas through the visual arts. Critical and public responses have not always been positive, especially from some of the more conservative commentators, despite the best attempts of art-practitioners and advocates.

## CERTIFICATE OF AUTHORSHIP/ORIGINALITY

I certify that the work in this thesis has not previously been submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of requirements for a degree except as fully acknowledged within the text.

I also certify that the thesis has been written by me. Any help that I have received in my research work and the preparation of the thesis itself has been acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

Production Note:
Signature removed prior to publication.

---

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A number of people have given generously of their time to assist me with my research for this thesis.

I would like to express my gratitude to the following individuals:

- Ms Katrina Lumley, Curator, Newcastle Region Art Gallery, N.S.W.
- Ms Sue Backhouse, Curator of Art, Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, Hobart, Tasmania
- Ms Diana Harrison, Assistant Director, The Salamanca Collection, Hobart, Tasmania
- Ms Jane Stewart, Director, Devonport Regional Art Gallery, Devonport, Tasmania
- Mr Euan Hills, Director of ARTMOB Aboriginal Fine Art, Hobart, Tasmania

I would also like to thank Dr Heather Goodall who took on the role as supervisor for her encouragement and feedback.

# Table of Contents


| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | Introduction | Page 4 |
| Chapter 1 | Role of the Museum | Page 19 |
| Chapter 2 | Where the bloody hell are we?<br>The Australian landscape | Page 52 |
| Chapter 3 | What does 'Australian' look like?<br>A fascination with faces | Page 80 |
| Chapter 4 | The rise and rise of indigenous art | Page 111 |
| Chapter 5 | The shock of the new!<br>Contemporary art in Australia | Page 163 |
| | Conclusion | Page 187 |
| | Bibliography | Page 194 |

# INTRODUCTION

Australian museums essentially share the task of telling the Australian story through the preservation, presentation and interpretation of artefacts and objects. Visual images contribute to the construction of ideas of national character. A number of images, such as certain works by Australian Impressionists like Roberts, Streeton and McCubbin, or Nolan's Ned Kelly series, are widely recognized as iconic, often becoming 'favourites' when they are exhibited publically. Over recent decades the representation of national identity has become a highly charged issue for many of these institutions, and particularly for national museums and collections. Australian museums reflect what has been occurring in the country over the last fifty years – a re-evaluation and a redefinition of Australian culture and society. A number of institutions are now working on ways to engage more effectively with audiences, whilst still servicing their traditional mandate to collect, preserve and display items of cultural significance

The museums' role has been shifting – they are no longer only 'keepers of treasures' but also 'interpreters of visual culture' promoting and engaged in dialogue with the community and using new means of communication with their audiences. This involves not only the national and state-based museums, though they try to maximize access to their collections[1], but also the regional institutions, some of which hold collections that are older than the national collections - a number of these regional museums of galleries house specialty collections of national significance (such as glass, textiles, works on paper), and have collections. Ultimately ideas form the substance of the dialogue with the audience in museums. As Andrew Sayers points out "All cultural institutions, regardless of their collecting mandates, are about people."[2]

This thesis looks initially at the development of museums and their engagement with the community in forming and presenting whatever it is that is distinctive about Australian identity. In looking at significant themes – landscape, portraiture, the rise of indigenous art and encounters with contemporary art – it becomes clear that any determination of national identity,

[1] For example, through touring exhibitions, such as the Archibald. or selected works from the collection and also a programme of lending works for display.
[2] Sayers, Andrew '*Preface' Portrait 36*, Winter 2010, National Portrait Gallery of Australia

especially since the Second World War has become increasingly fluid, multi-faceted and multi-layered. There are a number of areas worthy of further consideration, such as the emergence and recognition of women artists in Australia, shifts in the role and recognition of immigrant artists, and the portrayal of Australia's wartime participation and international peacekeeping activities. The restraints of this thesis did not allow me to follow up on these avenues of investigation.

'Australian identity' in art has been created as much by those members of the art world who selected works for acquisition by, and subsequent display in, public collections, as by the artists themselves. Therefore the focus is on the role of public collecting and exhibiting institutions – the art museums – in preserving or challenging the shape of an 'Australian' identity, facilitating community dialogue about that identity.

There has been an essential shift in our understanding of what history is about. The realms of myth and history are increasingly interrelated. Museums are involved in the narration of stories that refer to the temporal context of their world. Identity is one facet of this understanding. In the case of 'myth' the stories are not primarily concerned with chronologically defined events of the human world because they refer to another world. 'History' refers to earthly events – what people have done and experienced. It can be difficult to distinguish between myth and history, or to clearly determine which is more valid. Collective and individual memory, experience, explanation and interpretation and the means of presentation are intrinsically linked as museums contribute to national identity through narrative framework constructing or identifying nationhood. National histories reflect collective identity, telling at least in part, stories about the origins of groups of people. Here lies a link with the invention and conventionalisation of national myths and traditions.

In Australia national history was characterised by the construction of heroic personalities and events, the coming to terms with our colonial heritage and an anti-aristocratic liberal white Australian frontier. World War Two triggered a level of disillusionment with the relationship with Britain and Australian national historians began to become more self-critical, for example about concepts of mateship. The interest in identifying a distinctive and autonomous, postcolonial national experience coincided with the growing international interest in the new

social history from the 1950s onwards. Interest in popular culture was bound up in a national project of delineating a distinctive Australian culture. A trend towards understanding culture essentially in national terms was developing. At the same time Australian history was being professionalised, the standard histories of the various arts in Australia were also being published, and they too emphasized what was distinctive. By the 1990s an interest in histories of particular social groups, for example women, indigenous peoples, had emerged from demands for recognition and inclusion, reflecting moves by these groups to define themselves as distinct from the 'mainstream', constructing a group identity with a group history that legitimates their existence as a social entity. These alternate identities became highly contested in coming to terms with our national past and became fodder for significant cultural research and debate. Australia's distinctiveness was being found less in its political structures than in its culture, both high and low. An identity has emerged that is plural, fluid and self-referential. Questions of identity, meaning and representation are of crucial importance.

I have relied on a range of sources, drawing not only on a number of panoramic histories of Australia art and substantive exhibition catalogues, but also media articles as well as those in the magazines produced by the relevant public institutions, reviewing institutional policies and exhibitions and acquisition outcomes. These articles have been written by art critics and commentators, visual art academics, curators and art museum directors. During 2004 and 2005 I also undertook some primary interviews with gallery staff in Tasmania and Newcastle.

**'NATIONAL IDENTITY'**

For all the power of the radical nationalist tradition in cultural history, a significant amount of cultural history being written outside it. With the rapidly expanding fields of Aboriginal history and women's history through and beyond the 1970s, stimulated by effective political activism, there were devastating critiques of attempts to identify a celebratory, unitary (white, male) national culture. Confident assertions about a unifying Australian culture were undermined. Richard White's ***Inventing Australia*** (1981) insisted on the constructedness of national identity. History has been important in the national culture, providing everything from content for the film industry to evidence for legal judgements on Aboriginal land rights to consciousness-raising in the women's movement, as well as material for endless displays of national commemoration.

Physical artefacts collected, researched and displayed by public museums and galleries can provide a readily accessible means by which audiences engage in debate about Australian culture and identity. The role of these institutions has shifted significantly particularly over recent decades in which they have faced huge challenges to their modus operandi, funding accountabilities and their engagement with their audiences..

Despite the development of some specialist studies in the 1940s, the general Australian histories of the 1950s and 1960s had even less in indigenous material than their predecessors. Most European attempts at imitating Aboriginal culture amounted to mere caricature, sometimes amounting to outright expropriation. In other cultural spheres, such as literature, film, art and design, and also in anthropology and the press, interest in Aboriginal culture and conditions was growing, though often in a somewhat patronising way. By the 1970s indigenous rights had overtaken civil rights as the main aim of Aboriginal organisations. For European Australians the problem of relating Aboriginal to Australian culture and identity has become increasingly significant and vexatious.

The historians' focus on the nation, and indeed their nationalism as custodians of national identity, made it difficult for most of them to think beyond the framework developed by a white nationalistic settler consciousness. There were however some alternative voices amongst those whose work interacted with the growing political movement for equal and civil rights for indigenous peoples. For the most part though, it was only when public concern with racism in its local and international manifestations increased rapidly from the late 1960s that historians moved to the forefront of the investigation of the indigenous colonisation, dispossession and institutionalisation. Particularly since the 1970s onwards the profile of contemporary Aboriginal art has lent a powerful new force to the question of Australian identity in the visual arts.

From the 1980s, historians inspired directly by cultural theory shared this growing national focus. Their contribution has been to de-naturalise the nation. Cultural theorists have been concerned with the question of national identity – how it's created, its cultural meaning, its constructedness, its forms or representation. They have frequently been critics of the nation through the frameworks of feminism, multiculturalism and indigenous rights. Paradoxically, this

critical stance has helped to focus attention and framework of Australian historiography even more firmly on the nation than ever before.

Whilst 'multicultural' frameworks and policies were developed and promoted during the late 20th century, studies of 'Australian culture' proliferated. The modern population consists of the most complex ethnic mix on earth. Multiculturalism appeared to exist in a complex, ambivalent relationship with 'Australian' culture and attempts to analyse it. This awkwardness in historiography appeared to parallel an awkwardness and ambivalence at the heart of multiculturalism, which came under attack not only from right-wing conservatives, but more significantly, from critics on the Left who argued that multiculturalism 'does not accept, confront and challenge the discourse of race, but rather represses it'. Considerations of racial and cultural inclusion/exclusion appeared in the 1970s when 'Australian culture' was once again being consciously defined under the rubric of the 'new nationalism'. By the 1990s cultural historians attempted to expand the boundaries of 'Australian-ness' to include non-British cultures, but there remained a certain degree of awkwardness about the inclusion of non-Anglo background Australians who hovered at the margins of mainstream Australian history. It was only at the end of the 20th century that notions of transcultural hybridity began to appear – the understanding that cross-cultural encounters among different groups not only transformed those groups but also produced new 'hybrid' cultural forms within the dominant culture. The level of diversity and complexity seems to be more overtly recognised by many.

Processes of globalisation and decolonisation have brought new directions in Australia's attempts to create a distinctive national identity. Jacqueline Miller argues that it "has become something of a truism that Australia as a nation has been obsessed by the question of identity, hankering for a sense of national belonging in a global environment where its white history is dwarfed by its Northern Hemisphere counterparts. A country largely forged by relatively recent immigrants, and still mired in widespread ignorance of its long indigenous past, the cliché goes that Australia is on a perpetual quest to define itself, once and for all"[3]. Contemporary Australia,

[3] Millner, Jacqueline, '*Curating Australia for the Centenary of Federation', Continuum: Journal of Media & Cultural Studies,* Vol. 16, No 1 2002:42 (ISSN 1030-4212 print/ISSN 1469-366 6 online/02/010041-12 © 2002 Taylor & Francis Ltd DOI: 10.1080/1030431022012096 6

in many ways a product of British imperialism struggles to come to terms with a multiplicity of voices and to reconcile its future with its past.

A combination of indigenous aesthetics and activism has demonstrated that it is impossible for any national identity to be based on an exclusively colonial reading of Australian history. The relationship between visual culture and national identity is particularly intense in contemporary Australia because of the central role played by Aboriginal art in providing a voice and international attention of indigenous people. Aboriginal culture is now highlighted as offering something more complex, ancient, sophisticated and unique than the old bush mythologies which formally signalled Australian nationhood. The indigenous people had a more ancient and dynamic relationship with the land than the recent colonisers ever imagined. "It is as if only Aboriginality can provide a meaningful, significant and unifying resonance in the otherwise diverse cacophony of local multiculturalism and global cosmopolitanism."[4] This was graphically illustrated at the opening pageant of the Sydney Olympics in 2000

In the end, the question is whether we want to enforce a dominant, relatively homogenous view of Australian history and identity, or whether we allow the voices of the marginalised to be heard and included in stories of the geographical entity called 'Australia'. "If we regard the history of Australia as the complex and varied histories of the many different groups who have come and settled in someone else's land under the umbrella of colonialism, then the issues we engage with, the stories we tell, will bear the imprint of racial as well as inter-cultural and cross-cultural relations, stories which not only acknowledge dispossession and discrimination, but also tell of cultural ferment and dynamic hybridity."[5]

The question then arises as to whether or not there is such a thing as Australian art. To classify art by region is a crude process and of limited use, apart from being simply descriptive, referring to the sum of art objects made in Australia.

---

[4] Kociumbas, Jan, *'Performances:Indigenisation and postcolonial culture'* , Tsu and White, Richard (Eds) *Cultural History in Australia*, 2003, p 127

[5] Teo, Hsu Ming *'Multiculturalism and the problem of multicultural histories: an overview of ethnic historiography'* , Tsu and White (Eds) *Cultural History in Australia,* 2003 , p 154

In the 1920s some Australian critics, like J.S.MacDonald, argued that there was a 'genius loci' that shaped the personality and practice of Australian painters. This framework gave rise to much of the rhetoric against international art styles and influences, which continued for many decades. Many who talk about 'Australian art' are trying to denote "some kind of shared relationship to an environment among painters, whether physical, social or ideological. The exact nature of that relationship is, and always has been, left vague."[6] Rather than holding an inherent or intrinsic meaning, we now see attitudes to the surrounding environment as something created through a variety of representations or expressions – literary, dramatic, visual and musical. It seems to be worth exploring the shifting understandings and portrayals, for example, of landscape that change over time. Interest in ideas about land and landscape also indicates the continuing attempts to understand how predominantly Anglo Australians have understood what it might mean to be 'Australian'[7]. The trinity 'land, landscape, place' to which we might add 'space', has been understood as crucial to our cultural identity. The individual ways in which the negotiation of these things occurred, however, has not been thoroughly explored.

Robert Hughes views Australian painting as very self-conscious, obsessed with the problem of what its identity ought to be. Australian artists, afflicted with a sense of inferiority, are constantly left behind European avant-garde innovations. He argues that Australian artists, especially as they have engaged with movements in Contemporary art practices since the latter decades of the 20th century, seek to discover a relationship with other art works and what is happening beyond Australia's shores. In the context of modern art, he argues, it is pointless to look at isolated cultural pockets where regional styles may develop untouched by other influences. With the increasing speed of technological and communication advances, Australian artists are no more immune to instant exposure than anyone else, and this increased access can be of benefit. Even in the revised edition (1970) of his history of Australian art, Hughes makes no reference to the significant developments in Indigenous art that were beginning to become better known, nor does he raise the possibility that Indigenous and non-Indigenous artists may engage with each other or with the broader 'Contemporary art' world.

---

[6] Hughes, Robert, *The Art of Australia*, Penguin Books (Revised Edition, 1970) p.312

[7] Katie Holmes *'In spite of it all, the garden still stands: gardens, landscape and cultural history'* , Tsu, Hsu Ming & White, Richard (Eds) *Cultural History in Australia*, UNSW Press, Sydney 2003, p 172

Robyn Archer states "There is a sense that in this prosperous...place, Australia, in these best of times, that we should have the wealth and the time to ensure that when it comes to art all bases are covered. If art is to be appropriate to place then there is no avenue of contemporary Australia that we can exclude from being tackled through art and by artists that collectively show us all that we are – not just bits we want to think we are. In fact we do resource refugee art and art about refugees, we do resource indigenous art, but we still spend a higher proportion of all available arts money on reinterpretation of the western canon and its contemporary extensions: bolstering the currently much touted myth of a mainstream Australia that wants mainstream programming for mainstream audiences – those who could not reach the sea of civilization without their orchestra.[8]" Robyn Archer here advocates a role for the arts that goes beyond the mainstream both in terms of content and audiences, but is also in many ways particular to Australia, though not necessarily limited to Australia's borders. Contemporary Australia increasingly needs to look outward, to connect, to reach beyond the British world and its former manifestations of Empire and Commonwealth. It must go further – to continental Europe, Asia, the Pacific, the U.S., to other former dominions.

Traditional descriptions of national identity no longer convey Australia's complexity. Certain events manage to trigger public debate about what makes up guiding national values and principles that are 'truly Australian'. A core set of national values is increasingly difficult to negotiate in a modern and diverse society attempting to accommodate the ongoing development of distinct ethnic, cultural and religious communities and come to terms with indigenous cultural issues. Traditional values of egalitarianism, mateship and 'the fair go' can no longer be assumed, nor can we automatically refer back to common legends of nationhood despite repeated attempts to elevate the Anzac legend and the Federation story. The 'typical Australian' probably never existed, and certainly no longer exists with the current level of globalization. There has been some speculation that the desire to define what Australia was, should develop towards a 'sophisticated acceptance of the loose flows that constitute a national culture'. Millner (2002) argues that the concept that Australia is in a perpetual state of 'becoming' remains compelling.

---

[8] Excerpt from *'Putting Art in its Place: the 2004 Redmond Barry Lecture'* Arts Hub (Robyn Archer 12th July 2004)

The close linkage between visual culture and national identity is well established. Visual images contribute to the construction of ideas of national character. A number of images are generally regarded as iconic – even when many are unable to identify the title, date, artist or any other details that might appear on a museum label. These would include the ***Sunbaker*** or Nolan's ***Ned Kelly*** images or some of the Heidelberg landscapes.

In 1998 Robert Hughes claimed "There was Federation. There was Gallipoli. But nothing much to compare with the roll call of kings and queens, of set-piece battles and revolutionary upheavals and mighty movements of power and edifying utterances of moral principle, that formed the texture of English and European history...And that feeling that Australian history was by its very nature thin and derivative, a little dinghy towed in the wake of the English battleship, also affected responses to Australian culture..."[9]. According to Hughes the Australian legends, such as Anzac, Ned Kelly and the explorers, are touched by folly and defeat – those who have succeeded tend not to be remembered in the same way.

What it meant to be Australian was being figured in the 1901 commemoration of Federation, in a socio-political climate very different from that in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, and more contemporary and complex notions of national identity. The Australian idea in 1901 "lay in a synthesis of indigenous nationalism and Empire loyalty. Nationhood was a prize claimed by Australia, yet it was a gift bestowed by Britain...The entire idea of Australian nationhood was crafted for integration with the Empire."[10] Independence as it is now understood was not on the agenda in 1901. An awareness of the necessarily exclusive, even discriminatory implications of a 'national identity', especially one aided by state sponsorship, is as necessary as ever. The 'imagined community' of Australia began to celebrate its existence well before it was constituted as Federation. Those residing in the developing colonies thought of themselves as 'Australians', celebrating the country's foundation on 26th January 1788 as 'Australia Day' from the mid-nineteenth century. The anniversaries of European settlement were contested by some, who considered that there was little to celebrate. Some of these celebrations were larger and

[9] Hughes, Robert, '*A History (forgotten)', Reflections,* Issue 3, 1998
[10] Kelly, Paul, '*Child of the Empire', The Weekend Australian* , 10 &11 March 2001

more significant – the Centenary in 1888 which was celebrated unevenly across the nation[11], the Sesquicentenary in 1938 and the Bicentenary in 1988, with its twin themes celebrating the land of Australia and its cultural diversity. The organisers of each celebration[12] chose a different thematic focus around which to create a national mood, and to evoke national aspirations.

The period between the turn of the century and the crisis of World War II has traditionally been regarded as a trough in Australian art, sandwiched between the 'golden era' of the Heidelberg School and the Australian Impressionists, and the post-war emergence of modernism. James Gleeson, as a visiting curator for the National Gallery in 1978, argued that this 'forty year trough' could be "interpreted as an hiatus between two distinct but different forms of nationalism"[13]. The nationalism of the 1990s was a conscious artistic objective, rurally oriented and confidently extroverted and expressing the independence leading to the proclamation of the Commonwealth in 1901. The nationalism that emerged 'under the war clouds of the 1940s was different – as the cities grew there was a shift to urban themes. The general mood was more introspective, anxious, uncertain and subjective, partly at least in response to the Depression experience of the 1930s. These elements can be seen in the work of Nolan, Boyd and Tucker.

Distance was becoming less tyrannous – Europe was six weeks away, rather than six months. Study in Europe was increasingly part of an Australian artist's education and the character of Australian art responded to these encounters. James Gleeson describes the first forty years of the 20th century as "probably the most vital, explosive and revolutionary forty years in the history of Art, and little has been added since that was not at least foreshadowed in the experiments of that period"[14]. Whilst the changes in Australian art during that period seem relatively slow and reluctant, they were very real, marking an irreversible trend in terms of the emergence of

---

[11] In 1888 celebratory event were held in New South Wales and Victoria; South Australia didn't bother. By 1938 saw the first stirrings of the movement for Aboriginal rights. By 1988 this low key protest had become a more substantial protest.

[12] All of these anniversaries were contested by particular groups which considered that there was little reason to celebrate this particular date; Roslyn Russell (2005)

[13] Gleeson, James, *'Introduction', Aspects of Australian Art 1900-1940 from the Collection of the Australian National Gallery*, NGA Canberra 1978

[14] Gleeson, James, *'Introduction', Aspects of Australian Art 1900-1940 from the Collection of the Australian National Gallery* , NGA, Canberra 1978

'contemporary art' in Australia which was diverse and rich and more sophisticated than previously imagined.

By 1959, at a time Australia was beginning to take its cultural lead from American rather than Britain, a process that accelerated through the 1960s. Bernard Smith, on behalf of the Antipodean group, asserted in their Manifesto their concerns about a vanguard art that had become obsessed with abstract decoration at the expense of recognizable signs and symbols. Bernard Smith claimed in this Manifesto that "We live in a young society still making its myths. The emergence of myth is a continuous social activity. In the growth and transformation of its myths a society achieves its own sense of identity. In this process the artist may play a creative and liberating role. The ways in which a society images its own feelings and attitudes in myth provides him one of the deepest sources of art. The Antipodean exhibition gained almost legendary status in the story of Australian art. Bernard Smith's colleagues[15] included Arthur Boyd and John Percival who had been considered radical artists themselves in the 1940s, producing extraordinarily innovative expressionist work that had relied on strong iconic images to make an impact. The confrontation between figurative and abstract artists was played out entirely within the avant-garde. Conventional Australian painting, with its traditional landscapes, stately portraits and decorative still lifes, was largely indifferent to the claims of either party – they were irrelevant. In retrospect, the Antipodean message, despite its intention, seemed to be one of cultural isolation intent on resisting incoming foreign influences.

In his analysis of Australian culture and society, ***The Lucky Country***, published in 1964, Donald Horne reflected on the Australian 'type'. Horne echoed the sentiments of many of his generation who believed that during the 1950s and 1960s Australia was a vast suburban expanse which bred indifference, mediocrity and hedonism, rather than reflection and self-analysis. The expatriate community that perceived Australia in these terms had grown during this time as Jeffrey Smart, Barry Humphries, Germaine Greer and Peter Finch, amongst others, escaped what they perceived was a stultifying conservatism of Australian cultural life. Yet this was not a uniform response. There were those who could see more to the Australian suburbs, such as John Brack. In

[15] The group was made up of Charles Blackman, Arthur Boyd, David Boyd, John Brack, John Percival, Clifton Pugh and Robert Dickerson, holding only one exhibition together as 'Antipodeans 'at the Victorian Artists' Society in August 1959. The art historian Bernard Smith drafted *'The Antipodean Manifesto'* to accompany the exhibition.

Brack's work, the suburbs were a repository of anxieties, repressions and fears, of various neuroses and sinister possibilities. This approach was in contrast to that of Barry Humphries, whose alter-ego, Dame Edna Everidge, explored suburban life to identify the cultural sterility which he and his cohort were desperate to escape. Until very recently, historians have themselves replicated the very assumptions about the indifference of white Australia to contemplative reflection with the stifling culture of suburban life.

Some, like Imants Tillers and Paul Taylor, argue that Australian identity is not found in anything original but in its relationship with others. It is not an expression of some timeless and unchanging sense of where we come from. There is, in a sense an argument for the multinational nature of all countries, a necessary inter-relationship that might be particularly manifested in Australia. "Australian artists make apparent through their appropriation of other cultures that there *is* no original meaning to those overseas prototypes; that from the beginning it arises only as an effect of its re-reading and re-interpretation; that all cultures are 'unoriginal' like Australia's, which ironically becomes that 'original' they all resemble"[16]. This idea of Australian identity being found not in anything original but in its relationship with others is seen not just in Australian art but in Australian history, film and visual studies more widely. Richard White, for example, argues in *Inventing Australia* that a national identity is an invention[17], an artificial construct, and Anne-Marie Willis asserts in *Illusions of Identity* that there is no underlying 'essence' of nation, but a series of "figural appearances at different sites, generated from multiple sources and directed at different readers, who are also not fixed but in a continuous process of formation."[18]. Graeme Turner, writes in his *National Fictions,* that the nation "as a heterogeneous cultural and linguistic unit is not a closed history, something that has already been achieved, but is an open framework, continually in the making'.[19]. In 1994 Turner[20] states that most contemporary Australian films are not concerned with national identity, but are telling

---

[16] Butler, Rex *'Introduction'* , *Radical Revisionism: an Anthology of Writings on Australian Art,* IMA Publishing, Brisbane, 2005

[17] White, Richard , *Inventing Australia: Images and Identity 1688-1980*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney 1981

[18] Willis, Anne-Marie, *Illusions of Identity: The Art of Nation*, Hale & Iremonger, Sydney, 1983, p.29

[19] Turner, Graeme *National Fictions: Literature, Film and the Construction of the Australian Narrative*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1994, p. 154

[20] Turner, Graeme '*Whatever Happened to National Identity?'*, ***Metro***, No 10, Summer 1994, pp 32-35, as cited by Rowley, Stephen '*Australian Cinema and National Identity'(*1998) http://home.pacific.net.au/~satadaca/australi.htm (30/06/2005)

stories in local contexts, allowing questions of national identity to resolve themselves in the background through the various narratives. What it means to be Australian is revealed through the portrayal of different Australians, in different circumstances, with different concerns.

The contradictory and complex nature of Australian life was always going to resist institutional attempts to force it into a particular unified framework. Despite attempts to forge a unified national spirit, for example during the Bicentennial programme, there were counter gestures revealing cracks. Our celebrations are going to be haunted by the ghosts of European settlement. This problematic nature of the relationship between culture and national identity also permeated the major Bicentennial exhibition of Australian art, ***Celebrating Australia: 200 Years of Art 1788-1988***[21]. Diverse opinion in terms of works selected and their interpretation, lent 'an air of contention and debate' to ***Celebrating Australia***. This exhibition was made up of an eclectic amalgam of national symbols, icons and paraphernalia, evoking 'impressions of individual links' rather than a coherent narrative of national identity, or statement about the character of Australia. This approach also surfaced in several alternative cultural spaces in which "Australia was evoked as a no-place whose lack of national essence was its very defining characteristic, a space or pure possibility."[22] Daniel Thomas's brief introductory remarks highlighted various attributes that distinguished this exhibition from previous historical surveys of Australian art, including a claim that this was the first attempt to present Aboriginal art 'within the full continuity of Australian fart'. "Overall, the choice of works and their presentation in the catalogue leaves the impression of an unfinished project, and suggests that this endeavour is selective and partisan, part of a story, and a necessarily unfinished story at that".[23] This in itself may be telling.

Millner finds the rhetoric of the Australian Bicentennial Authority in 1988 and the Federation Authority in 2001 about opportunities to define ourselves and feel proud as a nation, both striking and alarming, especially considering the lack progress on reconciliation and constitutional reform. Moreover the Centenary of Federation year came 'hot-on-the heels' of the

---

[21] Initiated by the Gallery of South Australia, presented by the Australian Bicentennial Authority, and curated by Peter Emmett

[22] Millner, J. '*Curating Australia for Australia for the Centenary of Federation', Continuum: Journal of Media & Cultural Studies,* Vol.16, No 1, 2002

[23] Millner, Jacqueline '*Curating Australia for Australia for the Centenary of Federation' Continuum: Journal of Media & Cultural Studies,* Vol.16, No 1, 2002

Sydney Olympics when more than ever 'the eyes of the world were on us'. It seemed that much of the more complex national pride that galvanized in 2000 around an 'easy internationalism', the embrace of different cultures, and the focus on indigenous arts and traditions, had evaporated.

An exhibition with the resources and profile of the National Gallery's ***Federation: Australian Art and Society1901-2001***[24], given the brief to tell the story of Australian art over the last century, could have provided an important platform for debating issues of crucial importance to Australia at the moment. The opportunity however was lost in this rushed and cursory survey, that passively accepted that art 'reflects' society rather than participating in its development. The national identity represented does not match Australia's cultural complexity, and failed to capture the vitality of the many exhibitions held during the Sydney 2000 Olympic Arts Festival. The ***Papunya Tula: Genesis and Genius*** exhibition at the Art Gallery of New South Wales, for example, contributed in a more significant way to the debates about Australian art, history and identity than the ***Federation*** exhibition.

The predictable thematic groupings[25] loosely corresponded to chronological periods. The final section, '***Encounters***', compressing the work, driven by social and political concerns and produced in the last thirty years, failed to deal satisfactorily with the contemporary issues and aesthetic practices, including conceptualism, of these decades. This has been interpreted as an 'implicit affirmation of that other national cliché, anti intellectualism'.[26] There is little evidence that the exhibition, or the curator, has grappled with the complex links between representation and identity or the raging debates behind the idea of nation itself.

Despite the limitations of the exhibition and the lack of systematic scholarly argument in the catalogue, McDonald raises some pertinent points about the issue of Australian identity. He looks at the Olympic opening ceremony as an example of a 'state-sponsored attempt to fashion identity from carefully orchestrated spectacle' and a 'vision of Australian history that looked as

---

[24] Curated by the former newspaper art critic, John McDonald

[25] 'Beginnings', 'The Land', 'Cities and Suburbs', 'Boom and Bust', 'Patriotic Duty', 'At Ease', and 'Encounters' – the over-familiar traits of the so-called Australian national character

[26] Millner, Jacqueline '*Curating Australia for the Centenary of Federation', Continuum: Journal of Media & Cultural Studies,* Vol. 16, No 1, 2002

if it was designed by an advertising agency and produced by Universal Studios'[27]. McDonald also avers to the increasing reliance of white Australia on indigenous traditions in the search for a national identity. McDonald however does not go on to develop his argument and grant it the complex handling it warrants, or to suggest alternative ways of negotiating the relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal culture.

The way in which a community sees itself and is seen by others is evident in how and what it collects and displays, reflecting those personalities, characteristics, values and events held valuable for some reason – components linked to, for example landscape, portraiture, the relationship between indigenous and non-indigenous art, and place of contemporary art. The role of our national museums, has shifted particularly since World War Two as the Australian community has become more diverse, more articulate and interested in engaging in contemporary debates, technology has advanced in leaps and bounds, and, in the context of international museological developments, the institutions themselves have emerged more clearly as institutions in their own right with custom built, and often subsequently updated and extended accommodation. The re-evaluation of Australian identity is continuing and the national cultural institutions, especially those with significant material holdings for preservation, research, interpret and display, are able to provide both the material and the context for discussion about Australian identity and Australia's place in the world now and into the future.

[27] McDonald, (2000) as cited by Millner, Jacqueline *'Curating Australia for the Centenary of Federation' Continuum: Journal of Media & Cultural Studies,* Vol.16, No 1, 2002

# THE ROLE OF THE MUSEUM

The museum has been constructed as a symbol in Western society - a symbol that is both complex and multi-layered, signifying domination and liberation, learning and leisure. In the beginning of their history, museums provided meeting places for the public to encounter the unexpected, the remote and the exotic. A traditional definition of a museum describes a permanent institution in the service of society which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits material evidence of people and their environment[28]. They are not books – they provide physical, tangible, walk-through experiences of history and culture, speaking to their experiences, and connecting to their personal and collective memory.

Museums are of course diverse – museums of art, ethnography, history, science, technology, regional, university, and national – and they have never been more popular than they are now, as audiences marvel at the work of artists, craftsmen, and inventors and the discoveries of scientists, anthropologists and archaeologists. As sites for exposition museums mediate many of society's basic values through their collections, displays and buildings, and these mediations are subject to contestation. Presentation is never neutral, as selections are always reflect decisions about which components, which eras, which 'aesthetics' are more valuable. Museums have a role in the definition of local, regional and national narratives. Interest today increasingly focuses more on new interpretations of the same realities and the illumination of realities not previously exposed.

The modern museum itself, is a by-product of social changes that saw private collections opened up for public access, and the creation of national museums. The public museum concept emerged in the late 18th century, after the French Revolution, as a means of sharing what previously had been held, or might have been acquired, privately, in royal, aristocratic or church collections. Traditionally, the role of art museums has been to acquire, preserve and research objects deemed to be of value, and to regulate the social consumption of art. The museum was transformed from a symbol of arbitrary power into an instrument that would serve the collective good of the state through the education of its citizens. The distinguishing characteristics of the public museum

[28] Paraphrased from the International Council of Museums definition (see http://www.icom.org)

crystallized during the first half of the 19th century. Eileen Hooper-Greenhill argues[29] that the public museum was brought into being around two contradictory functions: that of 'the elite temple of the arts' and that of a 'utilitarian instrument for democratic education', later developing an additional function as 'an instrument of the disciplinary society' in which material was organized and presented for controlled or passive consumption. The architectural forms and internal spaces traditionally attributed to museums complimented these functions, as did museum disciplines and practices. In Australia, as late as 1975 the Piggott Report promoted the community of scholars rather than thinking about audiences. Over recent decades there have been tremendous challenges internationally to the 19th century museum frameworks, accompanied by significant shifts in practices and values, whilst still retaining many 19th century protocols. The widening debates have presented new challenges for museum professionals.

Contemporary museums have in fact come a long way from the nationalistic and self-improving goals of the early national museums of the 19th century, and are 'far more than repositories of the history of 'nations' or single national narratives'[30], now reflecting culture in a broader sense, a range of community concerns and to some extent transnational ideas. Museums today can be seen as critical to a nation's understanding of itself in the future, of possibly enormous significance to subaltern groups within societies and to humanity as a whole. For some institutions the emphasis is on preserving or representing the culture of a particular group; in other cases it is multi-focussed inclusiveness and yet in others the focus goes beyond territorial borders to focus of cultural elements of value to all human beings. The identity of the nation becomes increasingly fluid and contingent. The new inclusiveness of minorities, especially indigenous groups, and the presentation of multiple perspectives and controversial issues offer new directions for the future. Since the late 20th century, in the United Kingdom, Europe and throughout the industrialised world museums have become more numerous, more diverse and more widely popular than ever before.

---

[29] Hooper-Greenhill, Eileen *'The Museum in the Disciplinary Society'* in Pearce, J (ed), *Museum Studies in Material Culture*, Leicester, Leicester University Press, 1989, as cited by Bennett, Tony *'The Political Rationality of the Museum' Continuum: The Australian Journal of Media & Culture*, Vol.3. No1 (1990), Page 63,

[30] Turner, Caroline *'Editorial: Tomorrow's Museums'*, *Humanities Research* Vol. VIII, No 1 2001:2

At the beginning of the 21st century museums worldwide are coming under increasing scrutiny as public institutions. The historiographical and museological climate is changing. The term 'museum' can be applied to a variety of organizations and spaces, but the study of cultural institutions, and the role they play in the larger social arena, is an enormous field of study that touches many other disciplines such as anthropology, communications, education, art history, history of science and philosophy. Museums, like other heritage institutions are to some degree perceived as forums for public debate, spaces for education, social interaction and creative activities, memorials and places of mourning, and in some cases sites of healing of community trauma. The ways in which these institutions deal with issues of 'national identity' have now entered the public domain, as can been seen by the controversy surrounding the National Museum of Australia's presentation of European settlement.

The representation of national identity has become a highly charged issue for many museums, particularly for national museums. These museums are always, in part, a nation building exercise and national governments are aware of their potential impact on public debate. Dawn Casey, as Director of the National Museum of Australia, argues in 2001 that a National Museum of Australia could make 'a profound contribution to the evolving discussion of national history and identity, the place of Indigenous peoples in a pluralistic settler society and the aspirations of present day Australians for the future" [31] all in a context of a strictly finite set of resources – human, financial and technological.

Fiona McLean argues that "on the macro level, the transformation of identity has taken place within the backdrop of decolonization, imperial atrophy, globalization and the decline of the nation-state. At the national level, the challenge becomes one of reconciliation and of promoting national integration within the plurality and diversity of identity....National museums are implicit in the construction of national identities, and the ways in which they voice or silence difference can reflect and influence contemporary perceptions of identities within the national frame."[32] On the one hand, a museum may act as a voice of the state articulating identity and

[31] Casey, Dawn *'Case Study: The National Museum of Australia' Humanities Research,* Volume XIII Issue 1 2001(ANU) (www.anu.edu/hrc/publications/hr/issue 1-2001)
[32] McLean, Fiona, *'Guest Editorial: Museums and National Identity', Museum and Society*, March 2005 Volume. 3 Number 1

nationalism, whilst on the other hand, it may provide a public space for public discourse about identity and social inclusion. New interpretations of history have emerged during the last few decades, challenging traditional bases of nationalism, which has led some particular societies, like Australia and New Zealand, "to actively seek to understand and reconcile themselves with the past, in order to define an increasingly problematic and complex national identity."[33] Issues of identity, especially in relation to history, have gained a particularly prominent role in the political and cultural arenas in Australia and New Zealand.

The increased discussion about national identity in museums not only reflects these contemporary issues, but has also been a response to the burgeoning of new national museums of various kinds and substantial refurbishments of existing museums. I am interested in looking at the ways in which these institutions contribute to or shape discussion around national identity and representing that identity both to the Australian and international communities. Unfortunately, in this exercise, there is insufficient space for international comparisons, for example with the Canadian and New Zealand experience, where there are some parallels in the national experience of colonialism and the post-colonial re-examination of the legacies of European imperialism to understand their place in the international context, the renegotiation of the profile of indigenous populations, and wartime experiences in forging national identity. The nature of non-indigenous national identity has been particularly problematic and contentious, and much of the criticism directed at both the National Museum of Australia and Te Papa Tongrewa has centred on the perceived imbalance between the representation of non-indigenous culture. There is an increasing recognition within museums that they should not attempt to present a single interpretation of national identity, but instead suggest and question possible interpretations. However it is far from straightforward to translate this recognition into actual exhibition.

Museums form one of our 'national communities of memory' where individuals and groups learn how to remember the past and what is important to remember. They have also become sites which act as cross-cultural meeting grounds and 'interspaces' for the mediation of different

---

[33] Gore, James M. *'Representations of Non-indigenous History and Identity in the National Museum of Australia and Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongrewa'* http://www.jcu.edu.au/aff/history/articles/gore.htm)

modes of knowledge and experience. Museums in Australia today are increasingly presenting and examining controversial issues and diverse aspects of their stories. Contemporary Australian museums have been reflecting what has been occurring in this country over the last fifty years, .and may now be redefining Australian culture and society, revealing an interest in the personal stories of ordinary people and the stories of those groups not previously widely told. Nevertheless we know that cultural interaction is not always on equal terms, and a new conservatism towards history has emerged in some influential circles. The museum spaces will continue to be contested spaces as the increasingly nuances national narratives continue to develop.

Many social theorists have suggested that we are now living in an environment in which past identities are becoming increasingly irrelevant and in which new identities and new identity formations are being created. The 'nation-state identity', forged in the 19th century and spread over much of the globe, has been the subject of particular debate. The proliferation of museums in the 19th century was closely bound up with the formation and solidification of nation-states in, and later beyond, Western Europe. Museums were able to articulate two temporal narratives – firstly, a distinctive national trajectory and secondly, the nation as the end point of successive progression, encouraging people to imagine and experience themselves as members of an ordered but nevertheless sentimentalized nation-state.

Museums today can be seen as critical to a nation's understanding of itself in the future. Questions emerge for museums concerning their role in a world in which national identities are being increasingly challenged through the emergence of significant interest groups and social movements, the increasing short-term and long-term movement of people across traditional borders, and from the increasing influence or transnational organizations, networks and technologies. The nature of identity is being challenged and transformed. New types of museums and heritage sites have emerged, and the diversity of material culture that museums collect, preserve and display has expanded extraordinarily. Whilst museums already had developed a role, through existing exhibition practices, in translating the past into a significant facet of late 19th century public culture, a redefinition of the functions of museums to include contributions to cultural survival and revival of subaltern groups poses new and complex issues for museum

professionals. Museums seem to have become more accessible and at least to some degree, more representative and accountable.

Discussion continues about the ways in which museums are able to act as manifestations of identity and sites for the contestation of identities, including 'national identity', that are not universal but historically and culturally specific. Some would argue that museums are too closely bound up with the material and place rooted conceptions of identity to effectively wrestle with the emerging identity dilemmas of the 21st century. Macdonald[34] argues that museums, because of their longstanding and central roles in the articulation of identity, are significant sites in which to examine such claims.

The museum, like other public institutions in the 20th century, has been subject to ongoing demands for reform, primarily characterized by two principles – firstly, the principle of public rights underpinning the demands that museums should be open and accessible to all; and secondly, the principle of 'representational adequacy' sustaining the demand that museums should adequately represent the cultures and values of different elements of the community. Particularly for those institutions dependent, or largely dependent, on public funding, there is an ongoing and sometimes very public debate between museum professionals, the politicians, the bureaucrats and the media about what should be presented and how. New curatorial and exhibition practices and new visions of the museum's functions have arisen largely driven over the last century by the principle of 'public rights' demanding that museums should be open and accessible to all, and the principle of 'representational adequacy' advocating that the cultures and values of different community components should be adequately represented. These forces have significant implications for existing institutions and the establishment of new institutions or spaces in whatever form they may take.

During the course of the 20th century, viewing objects in essentially aesthetic terms became a common phenomenon. The selection and isolation, and 'purification' of art, its organization as a distinct object of aesthetic contemplation, of the 'pure gaze', and its separation from the

[34] Macdonald, James M. , '*Museums, national, postnational and transcultural identities*', *Museum and Society*, March 2003, Vol.1 No 1

vulgarity of the 'popular aesthetic' - these have played a key role in the social processes through which the 'elites' differentiated themselves from the 'popular' classes, by virtue of being able to identify and appreciate seminal objects selected as representative of a larger group or culture. In the current environment this framework is being increasingly challenged - the greater the field of exploration, the more we increase the number of examples, the more we are able to see, evaluate and compare.

To what extent are museums vaults in which rare and curious specimens or the 'aesthetically valuable' are stored in perpetuity? Museums, valued as repositories of objects, generally considered the preservation of their collections in perpetuity as their primary responsibility, rather than actively engaging their audiences and increasingly judged by how effective they are as agents of social debate. Public art museums have, in recent decades, become the most significant art institutions in Australia, largely supplanting the artists' societies, art schools, and prize exhibitions of earlier generations providing the forum for serious art discourse. Especially since the 1970s museums have undertaken a paradigm shift, challenging the 19th century framework, the twin roles as 'moral edifiers' and repositories of scientific classifications of the natural and human world, and of the great cultural masterpieces that had been accompanied by a perception of exclusivity and elitism. These institutions are no longer just about objects but increasingly about people. This can be seen, for example, in the increasing interest in the presentation of individual and community stories and the recording of 'oral histories' not only from 'the great' and 'the famous' but from so-called ordinary people.

Over the last decade or so museums have transformed their attitudes toward the interpretation of objects. Cultural institutions must still pay attention to preservation, research and presentation, but most are engaging in the creation of dialogues, narratives and experiences around items. A commitment to risk and experimentation has become increasingly evident. In looking at museums we need to look at the collections and how they were collected, the contemporary and historical social and cultural role of museums, the production of knowledge through exhibitions, learning in museums and the experience of the visitor. There have been huge changes with an increasing focus on communicating with the audience and engaging new and diverse audiences. The museum's role is very much about being telling stories and creating narratives around an

object or works of art that will deal even with complex ideas and themes, difficult and challenging material and complex ideas. Future museums may develop new partnerships with other museums, universities and other educational institutions, to undertake further research or joint-projects that would otherwise not be possible.

Museums continue to accommodate many new ideas in their emerging role as keepers of culture. One of the key concerns in the museum movement is the responsibility associated with guardianship and interpretation, particularly as it is applied to indigenous cultures. This is controversial especially given the sensitivities surrounding the museum sector's past role as collector during the imperial-colonial period, presenting these cultures as 'primitive' and items as 'ethnographic curiosities', and the ongoing discourses on indigenous issues. Questions arise about what this guardianship means and what the boundaries are, and these debates engage indigenous concerns with a number of overlapping museological disciplines. There have been many instances of items, ranging from the Elgin Marbles to indigenous remains that have been subject to requests and significant lobbying for their return to the country or community of origin. Museums, not only in Australia, but also in Canada and New Zealand are grappling with many of these issues - with their similar experiences of European settlement, pre-existing indigenous populations whose voices and stories need to be heard and understood, and ongoing immigration increasing the community's complexity and diversity.

Museums are now far more than repositories of 'nations' or single national narratives – they reflect culture in the broadest sense and diverse community concerns as well as transnational ideas. Their contemporary mission statements are as much concerned with education as with preserving objects. There are inevitably significant implications for existing institutions and the establishment of new institutions or spaces in whatever form they may take. The degree to which museums in Australia are prepared to present and examine controversial issues or alternative narratives, to tackle inherently ambiguous, problematic representations is in itself subject to debate.

Whilst some say that the demands imposed on the museum from outside, flow out of, and are generated by the internal dynamics of the museum form[35], Tony Bennett argues that these principles set up tensions. The 'public rights' demands are premised on the popular education rhetoric, whilst museum practices often, in effect, differentiate populations. The demands based on the principle of representational adequacy is linked to the expectation that the public museum embodies the principle of general human universality on the basis of which any particular museum exhibition practices will be found wanting. The museum context would be perceived as an incongruous environment for some, who feel it more appropriate to represent themselves and their interests in other environments. Examples of this would include many of those involved in contemporary art, including performance artists, and street artists, as well as programs developed for and by minorities or marginalized groups who may feel 'out of place' in an art museum environment. A whole set of other agents in the art sector (artists, curators, art-educators, art commentators, private gallery owners, dealers, sponsors and donors) are also engaged in the dynamic re-evaluation of the role of an art museum. The practices of distinction that the art museum affects through its role in regulating the social consumption of art products cannot be understood. Pierre Bourdieu argues[36], independently of the process through which a range of agents in the art world, including artists themselves, curators, commercial gallery owners and dealers, have historically fashioned art's autonomy or distinction from the 'popular aesthetic'.

Tony Bennett argues that natural history and ethnographic museums, like art museums, must be understood as 'both in and of modernity', belonging to, and helping to shape its organisation of the relations between past and present. They are institutions of 'slow modernity' in which "the time series they organize serve as templates for regulated progress and, as such, are just as much institutions of culture as art museums."[37] Bennett supports William Ray's analysis of the similarities and distinctiveness of different kinds of museums as an 'historically specific set of machineries for shaping and directing persons by actively involving them in the processes of their own self-formation'

---

[35] Bennett, Tony '*The Political Rationality of the Museum*', *Continuum: The Australian Journal of Media and Culture,* Vol.3 No 1

[36] As cited by Bennett, Tony, *Pasts Beyond Memory: Evolution, Museums, Colonialism* , Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, London & New York, 2004 p.188

[37] Bennett, *Pasts Beyond Memory, 2004* p.187

For Ray (2001), government institutions hold two contrasting notions of the citizen - 'a creature of habit' and an 'analytical individual'. Ray [38] argues that the modern 'logic of culture' involves the interplay of these two models with each other and their engagement with the programmes and practice of cultural institutions, striking different balances between these competing tendencies. Whilst viewers bring their own stories to individual works, the way in which they are collected, presented and repackaged by collective interests, particularly by publicly funded institutions at various levels, at least facilitate the selective interpretation of cultural objects and stories.

Tony Bennett explores the value of thinking of museums as 'civic laboratories'[39] - as places in which 'civic experiments' are conducted through relationships between people and objects that museum arrangements effect and the forms of self-governance that such relationships make possible. In museums, we can investigate the relationships between objects, the relationship between objects and people, and the fabrication and configuration of those relationships - museums continue to conduct these experiments. The mere placement of the object in the museum changes the context, and the object becomes part of a museum fabrication. Objects and relationships can be reconfigured in different, and sometimes alien, contexts and natural temporal cycles can be dispensed with. As laboratories, museums recast objects by placing them, however temporarily, in new locations and new timeframes – new configurations of social objects that can illuminate or create alternate narratives and meanings, and potentially provide the ability to remould society. Museums, not only draw on the past and cultural memory, but also have a role in tackling the present and the future, bringing contemporary debates to the forefront, stimulating debate and potentially confronting and challenging audiences.

By the beginning of the 21st century museums in post-colonial societies, as a variously constituted category of institutions, world-wide are subject to increasing scrutiny as public institutions. Museums have changed radically in response to many forces, such as the adoption of new roles and functions, economic rationalism and moves towards greater democratic access.

---

[38] Bennett, *Pasts Beyond Memory: 2004* p.187

[39] Bennett, Tony '*Keynote Address: Civic Laboratories/The fabrication of Cultural Objects/ Self Governance*', *Rebirth of the Museum – An International Symposium*, 8th & 9th July 2004 (http://www.english.inimelb.edu.au/events/rebirth.html)

These institutions may be valued in terms of their contribution to society through knowledge - enhancing research and cultural tourism, but they are also expected to raise at least some of their own revenue and to justify their activities in quantitative terms related to the national economy. Cultural institutions, government funding, the high culture/low culture divide, access to cultural activities, the identification of certain activities rather than others as 'cultural'- these issues have become fodder for policy considerations and academic disputes in Australia over recent decades. In this context, public sites and institutions, domestic spaces and even certain natural domains have become imbued with political and cultural meanings invested with the shifting values attached to content or popular aesthetics. These spaces or sites can be analyzed in various ways to determine how they and their meanings have been negotiated by their respective stakeholders.

Museum professionals are radically rethinking the purposes and goals of institutions within the sector and to renegotiate their relationship to, and the role within society. Political, economic and social pressures have forced museum professionals to develop new curatorial and exhibition practices and new visions of their democratic and pedagogic functions. If museums are to become effective agents for social inclusion and participation, challenging audiences to engage in contemporary dialogues about culture and history in this country, they must engage in a paradigmatic shift in their role and purpose and concomitant changes in working practices. Some institutions may be more at risk than others because of a claimed "Australian anti-intellectual cultural prejudice" against the lucid expression of informed and sustainable.

Factors such as historical legacy, political and social influences, marketing and visitor studies contribute to a museum's representation, or multiple representations of competing ideas. There is a long relationship between large scale, officially sponsored exhibitions and ideas of nation in Australia, highlighting the phenomenon whereby governments, in promoting national culture, generally tend to favour 'quality' high culture over other forms of visual culture and also contribute to 'nation building', despite what is generally a narrower audiences who directly witness such events. Seeds of this can be seen in the great exhibitions held prior to Federation, and elements can be seen in the cultural activities surrounding the Bicentenary in 1988, the Sydney Olympics, and the Centenary of Federation, and the periodic promotion of Australia overseas through the arts.

Whilst William Lieberman at the Metropolitan Museum in New York had drawn together a modest amount of Australian art, and mounted a Nolan show, it was the only museum[40] in the world to do so. Despite Australia being the 'flavour or the month' in London for a year or so in the 60s, no British museum has ever done so. This level of acceptance helps to convince collectors to become seriously interested in purchasing works.

Max Ross argues that with the shift towards a more visitor-centred ethos, there is a corresponding shift in the identity of the museum professional from 'definer or mediator of legitimate culture and knowledge' to 'interpreter' of cultural meaning, and facilitating access, including access by non-traditional museum audiences.[41] This shift clearly impacts not only on an institution's acquisition and exhibition policy. Concerns arise about public access to collections, marketing, public program, education and publishing activities. Exhibitions are themselves only one form of public access to collections and to works held by other institutions, or in private and corporate collections. There is increasing interest in touring selected items or exhibitions, public programmes, digital access to collections and publishing activities. It is also becoming more widely known that access is often possible to institutional archives and to material held in storage or stockrooms. The sizeable commercial gallery sector and the increased interest in 'art for investment' have also emerged as areas for research and discussion.

Whilst the museum sector is all too familiar to change, Ross also argues that some museum professionals and some institutions show some signs of resistance to the forces of change...or at least some stresses and tensions, emerging from a culture where traditional academic disciplines, boundaries around areas of expertise and classifications that serve to define and defend professional and social identities.

---

[40] The Harold E. Mertz Collection of Australian art, complied by the Adelaide dealer, Kym Bonython in the 1960s, donated to the University of Texas in 1971 and stored in the university art gallery's vaults for 30 years, was put up for auction in June 2000, creating many Australian records.

[41] Ross, Max, '*Interpreting the New Museology*', *Museum and Society*, July 2004, Vol.2 No 2

As the National Gallery of Victoria's Director, Gerard Vaughan, outlined in 2007[42] the public galleries are not businesses but 'not-for-profit' arts organisations. However they must increasingly be business-like in the way they think and operate. Whilst managing businesses/franchises, such as restaurants, cafés and bookshops, they must remain focussed on the prime objectives and values as custodians of a collection held on behalf of the public, and to be accessed by the public. There are tensions between being serious about art history, research into the historical consequence of the collection, the acquisition of significant material and maintenance of the collection, and the need to be conscious of the market, to make the collection accessible and interesting, and an imperative for a level of 'business savvy' in this environment. The environment is different for the private sector though there seem to be significant connections.

In an era of economic rationalism, the art critic John McDonald asserts[43], every enterprise, including public galleries are expected to at least to appear to perform to maximum capacity. For much of the last decade funds have been drying up causing some strain. The 'global financial crisis' added extra urgency - in periods of economic downturn, corporate supporters re-evaluate their sponsorship relationships and visitors may not have as much money to spend within an institution's commercial ventures. Museums have been increasingly dependent on commercial sponsorship and other sources of income for example through merchandising, catering and other programmes. Museum leaders also need to find an effective language to advocate for their institutions in a period of diminished resources. Museums need to be able to make a stronger case for financial support from both private and government sources so that they are able to sustain their core missions.

Since the Second World War the increasingly fast dissemination of reproductions of art works through illustrated art books and magazines, television programmes and films has enabled a larger public to become familiar with works of art, both historical and contemporary, from beyond Australia's borders, allowing people to compare, at first hand, works by Australian artists

---

[42] Vaughan, Dr Gerard (Director, National Gallery of Victoria), *'Welcome address'*, *Sites of Communication Symposium*, National Gallery of Victoria, 7 & 8 September 2007

[43] McDonald, John, '*Masters and Servants; Dutch Masters from the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, National Gallery of Victoria to 2 October 2005', The Sydney Morning Herald* 13 & 14 August/2005

with those by overseas artists. People have become more aware of art from various cultures, as well as new trends and developments. An increasing number of loan exhibitions have also toured, attracting large broadly based audiences.

Public galleries are expensive to operate, and a major shift in the latter part of the 20th century lay in the shifting rationale for government support, based increasingly on the public educational value of museums, and the new organisational forms in which that support was expressed. All public galleries are under pressure to be successful in the eyes of their political masters, and attendances are a significant measure of this success. Public galleries no longer have the 'luxury' of being able to mount exhibitions 'in the public interest' regardless of attendances, but are expected to engage an increasingly diverse audience. In an effort to be more popular they face a conundrum – how to democratize their programming without trivializing it? Entertainment and education however need not be mutually exclusive Many are finding it difficult to attract the required numbers, either because of the competition for audience share or possibly because exhibitions aren't capturing the public's imagination. Smarter marketing and community outreach are only part of the solution. The so-called blockbuster plays a particular role in this drama.

Unlike major overseas museums, such as the British Museum, the Louvre, the Tate, Australian museums are predominantly dependent on domestic visitors, and need to develop ways of relating to them and cultivating recurrent visits. Strategies include the development of special exhibitions, including the 'blockbusters' and associated events, that to some degree, trigger visits to the permanent collections. These big shows can't be too esoteric, but must be popular enough to make them economically viable. However if a blockbuster show is 'over-hyped' audiences can be alienated and they may not return. Blockbusters, if well managed, provide opportunities to introduce new and loyal audiences.

The National Gallery of Victoria's Australian collection for example, is large enough to be reformatted in a wide variety of ways, unlike the European collection. Elizabeth Ann Macgregor argues that "the most successful facilities for cultural tourism are where there is a keen sense of

locality. [Tourists] want to be in places where local people eat, drink and enjoy their leisure."[44] Macgregor sees the Museum of Contemporary Art as part of the mix whereby Sydney is promoted as a dynamic, forward-looking and active city in which a contemporary art museum plays an important role. Both Brisbane and Melbourne are also using their cultural institutions to, at least to some extent, to define the character of their cities. Art museums provide opportunities to represent not only the local interest in and appreciation of culture, but also to show the extraordinary range and diversity of living artists – from Aboriginal bark painters to young artists experimenting with new media. More than ever we need a city with a strong cultural profile, a profile as diverse as the city itself."[45]

As the purchasing power of the Australian art museum sector is relatively limited, especially in comparison to the wealthier museums in Europe and the US, the National Gallery aims to complement, rather than compete with the state collections. The state galleries do not need to aspire, as the National Gallery of Australia has, to such a large and comprehensive collection of Australian art in terms of regions, media and historical significance.

In Australia each of the national and state galleries has a particular history and presence, generally set up to collect and organise material of 'cultural significance'. The history of individual museums impacts significantly on the role that each collection plays and the way in which the public is able to access that collection. These institutions now have vision statements, service agreements with governments, some level of Government funding, an increase in 'earned' income, and significant sponsorships and gifts from private and corporate sources. Strategies need to be developed to communicate with community, government, corporate, sponsor and donor stakeholders, and to connect with the culture or our time. Institutions need to develop their 'brand' and disseminate it, whilst making the most of its history, its collection and accompanying body of research, and the expertise of its staff. Many of these institutions also have access to a groundswell of committed volunteers who raise funds and who undertake a range of activities that contribute to operations with minimal financial outlay from the institution

[44] Macgregor, Elizabeth Ann, *'Art, too, is important to our identity'*, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 31 October 2006
[45] Macgregor, Elizabeth Ann, SMH, 31 October 2006

National museums or galleries in Australia have been largely a product of the second half of the 20th century - science, history and natural history museums, libraries and art galleries developed in each of the 19th century colonies as part of initiatives to create a 'civilized' society. Sydney's Australian Museum, first officially recognized as an Australian Museum[46] in 1827, was followed by the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery (TMAG), the origins of which can be traced back to 1829. TMAG is unique amongst its interstate colleagues as it remains a joint museum and art gallery, which provides opportunities for much broader exhibitions[47] drawing on their rich collections across many disciplines from humanities to science without necessarily making distinctions between objects as 'ethnographic', 'social history' or 'fine art'. There is a risk that in some situations curators may be over-ambitious and reach too widely across an institution's collections, assembling displays that lack focus or that are too busy and disparate for audiences to absorb. TMAG's establishment was followed by the National Museum of Victoria, the Queensland Museum, the South Australian Museum, the Science Museum and Victoria & Melbourne, the Museum of Applied Arts & Sciences[48] in Sydney, and the Western Australian Museum.

In Australia the establishment of science museums[49] and State libraries, regarded as fundamental resources for education and instructive entertainment, preceded by some years the establishment of art museums, while some history museums are even more recent. In some cases the chronological discrepancies are notable - the Art Gallery of New South Wales, for example, was established in 1874 over 45 years after the Australian Museum's establishment and the Queensland Art Gallery was established in 1895, some 40 years after the Queensland Museum. The Queensland Art Gallery's experience was typical of that of Australia's smaller states – long periods of official neglect, problems with accommodation for the collection, and shortages of

---

[46] Contained in a dispatch (27 March 1827) from Lord Bathurst at Westminster informing Governor Darling of NSW that he was 'disposed to allow not more than £200 a year towards the foundation of a public museum'. The collection did not find a permanent home until 1849 with the completion of the 1st building on the present site.

[47] The '***Eclectica: 160 Years of Collecting***' exhibition for the State's Bicentennial celebrations in 2004, drew items from eleven different disciplines, and was largely based around themes and profiles of particular individuals to make connections and provide depth to the individual stories.

[48] Originally the Sydney Technological Museum , now the Powerhouse Museum.

[49] This was a great new era for all the scientific disciplines. At the close of the 19th century, the museums of natural history were committed to collection in the field, acquisition of comparable samples from overseas, classification and display based on traditional taxonomic principles. The display of the collections, secondary to the museum's research, were displayed in an orthodox way.

funds for acquisitions, occasionally alleviated by acquisitions funded by a handful of benefactors and supporters. The Gallery grew significantly after the World War II and the progress of the new Gallery has stimulated more gifts and bequests.

In November 1898 the first ***Australasian Art Exhibition*** was held in Adelaide[50].The South Australian Gallery acquired some seminal works from this and subsequent exhibitions. The years from 1900 to the early 1970s, whilst the Commonwealth sponsored its first collections in the 1920s and 1930s[51], were dismal years for most Australian museums, including the art museums, apart from the National Gallery of Victoria[52]. The histories of the State art museums provide many examples of neglect and deterioration of important collections – the art museums, unlike the science museums, occasionally had access to government largesse and were more likely to receive bequests and other endowments which assisted acquisitions. After World War II there was a revival of interest in art collections which gradually gathered pace. Since the inception of the biennial Adelaide Festival of Arts in 1960, the South Australian Gallery has played a significant role in bringing major exhibitions to Australia, and has focused on the history of art in South Australia, furthered by an active publication programme on South Australian artists. The resurgence of government and public interest in science and history collections was slower. The 1970s witnessed a remarkable renewal of vitality in museum administration and a degree of optimism about the future, reflected in a range of ambitious refurbishment and expansion programmes in the major metropolitan museums.

The 1975 Piggott Report's definition of a national collection as 'Any collection of merit which is funded predominantly from public funds – Federal, State or municipal...[53]' provides a limited framework. Such a definition excludes material held in private institutions, which is drawn to public attention by loans to exhibitions or when a significant item is purchased outside Australia.

---

[50] 8 works were purchased by the South Australian Gallery. This arrangement continued until 1922-23. During this period 26 exhibitions were held and the Gallery acquired, through the Elder Bequest, some of its most significant Australian works

[51] Throughout this period the National Archives was also building up a documentary history if the Australian Commonwealth.

[52] Largely due to funding available from the Felton Bequest.

[53] *'Museums in Australia', Report of the Committee of Inquiry on Museums and National Collections, 1975* (*Piggott Report*) as cited by Lloyd, Clem & Sekulis, Peter, *Australia's National Collections*, Cassell Australia Ltd, Sydney/Melbourne, 1980

It also doesn't take into account the shifting and more complex funding and income models being developed by many of the major institutions.

Until the opening of the National Museum of Australia[54], the Australian War Memorial in Canberra could be described as the national history museum for Australians by default[55], presenting a nation forged in international conflict, beginning with Gallipoli. It is still one of the most visited museums in Australia, and has developed a significant profile through its research facilities, the professional expertise of its staff and its readiness to be involved in, if not promotion of, public debate and national memorial events like Anzac Day. The National Gallery of Australia, and the National Portrait Gallery are now also well-established in Canberra.

The $155 million National Museum of Australia opened in March 2001, although it had been in the pipeline for some years. It was almost inevitable that the such a social history museum, with its charter to collect and display around the themes of ***'Land'***, ***'Nation'*** and ***'People'***, would be the subject of major controversy given the added impetus of the many contemporary debates in the public and political arenas about Australia's history since European settlement, and whose story should be told in the midst of contesting interests. The ensuing institutional conundrum is a familiar one in relation to traditional narratives of 'belonging'. Whose narrative history is to be presented and how is it to be effectively presented in the museum context? Is it possible, or even necessary, to reconcile all the different views of the nation and its history in this once dialogic space? To what extent can a museum present multiple perspectives of a nation that encompasses a wide range of histories? Our understanding of history depends on who we are and where we or our ancestors came from. As Dawn Casey, Director of the National Museum at the height of the 'History Wars' asserted that "the pendulum of history may have swung from one orthodoxy to another, but museums, although responsive to changes in the public debate, cannot afford to change with each pendulum swing or to be driven by political ideology. Neither can we unlearn

[54] The Report of the Committee of Inquiry on Museums and National Collections (*The Piggott Report*, 1975) recommended the establishment of a Museum of Australia. The Piggott Report also recommended that local museums should be consolidated into larger regional collections which could provide improved administrative and curatorial support.

[55] The Australian War Memorial Act stresses the collection of war relics but makes no reference to the national significance of the collection.

the insights of recent years and return to a predominantly Anglo-Celtic story - diversity is here to stay[56]"

The role of a national collection had to be worked through in relation to, for example, the already well-established State collections, and the fact that, by virtue of its more recent establishment, the Museum did not have to deal with the heritage of a largely 19th century collection. It is a primarily 20th century museum focusing on experience within living memory and how the past engages with everyday life, using objects as triggers for the visitor's memory, rather than presenting the 'triumphal march to nationhood'. There had been an attempt to present a shared view – whilst being accused of institutionalising an ideologically-driven 'black-arm band view of Australian history, indigenous Australia is presented as a 'pan-Aboriginal community without consideration of the complexity and diversity that actually exits, or of the intergenerational shifts that are occurring. Apart from the Aboriginal exhibit, some argued[57] that the underlying message in the collection in which the 'most profound items' were an upside-down Hills Hoist and Azaria Chamberlain's dress' was that Australia's white history was either a joke or too boring to consider. The Museum was accused of incorporating significant political bias into the exhibits[58] and reworking Australian history from a 'politically correct' perspective.

The items selected as 'national treasures' tend to be an eclectic selection, including the first Fleet surgeon's table, Frank Hurley's motion camera used in Antarctica, a wall-hanging made by a refugee in post-World War II Germany and given to an Australian aid worker, and Rolf Harris's hand-painted wobble-board. Seven hundred and fifty objects, many of them recently acquired, have been selected for the National Museum of Australia's newly unveiled permanent gallery – ***Australian Journeys*** – have been chosen as symbolic of some aspect of Australia's complex interaction with the world. This refurbishment, costing $4.8 million, of the originally installed ***Horizons*** gallery is the first revamp of a so-called permanent exhibition since the museum opened in 2001. The Museum's director, Craddock Morton, described the ***Horizons*** gallery as

[56] Casey, Dawn *'Nation of many stories' The Australian* 6 October 2003
[57] Devine, Miranda *'Why art is a dirty word', Sydney Morning Herald*,11 August 2005
[58] Windshuttle, Keith *'How not to run a museum, Quadrant*, September 2001

one of the weakest in the early years because the Museum didn't have the objects at the time to represent the settlement of Australia.[59]

Over the last seven years, Federal funding has facilitated the implementation of the Museum's $13.5 million acquisition policy, addressing some of gaps in the collection and the public displays. The new exhibition represents an intellectual shift in the way the story of Australian migration is portrayed moving beyond the traditional representation of where immigrants have come from, how they got here and how their arrival changed Australian society – ***Australian Journeys*** explores the rich cultural tapestry through individual objects that illustrate wider themes, including the cultural impact Australian expatriates have made abroad.

The National Gallery of Australia's collections rightly reflect recent Australian history and, situated in the national political capital, it should also be relevant to contemporary strategic engagements. Apart from the core role of presenting a representative collection of the highest aesthetic excellence to a diverse audience, the National Gallery has two flagship roles[60] – firstly as the leading research and interpretation centre for Australian art, incorporating the future development of a formal research institute and public education centre in the Centre for Australian Research, and secondly in setting professional standards for, and providing professional development assistance to, Australia's smaller art museums. The serious and scholarly bicentennial exhibitions were the most vivid example of the gallery's charter even though they may not have been great crowd drawcards at the time. The government of the day, rather than applauding the gallery for its achievements, seemed more concerned with the gallery's role as a money-earner and as part of the regional tourist package instead of a significant 'cultural heritage institution'. Without an injection of additional funds the gallery could not fulfil both roles.

---

[59] As cited by Meacham, Steve '*Old horizons abandoned, and guilt dismissed' The Sydney Morning Herald*, 6 February 2009. It has recently been announced that Andrew Sayers, from the National Portrait Gallery, will take over as director of the National Museum of Australia.

[60] The National Gallery Act 1975 provided the gallery with a charter 'to develop and maintain a national collection of works of art' and that it should 'use every endeavour to make the most advantageous use of the national collection in the national interest'

Each component of the gallery's audience has particular expectations and requirements. A 'national gallery', especially one in the national capital of a federation like Australia, Canada or the United States, draws not only local visitors but also interstate and international visitors, many of whom would not normally visit museums in their home regions. These local and international audiences also include politically sensitive audiences which note the profile, or lack thereof, given to their community's art. "In its national art museums, a mature nation should strongly reflect a confident appreciation of its own art and a sympathetic interest in that of its neighbours. Australian culture, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, has always been a highly visual one. The National Gallery of Australia's collections, exhibitions, publications and building must therefore proudly echo our national and international cultural and international cultural and strategic aspirations."[61]

The Gallery's first Director, James Mollison, established an early vision revealed in several major touring exhibitions in the years immediately prior to the Gallery's official opening on 12 October 1982. These included *'Genesis of a Gallery'* (1976-78), *'Genesis of a Gallery, Part 2'* (1978-89) and *'Aspects of Australian Art'* (1978-1980). Whist the national collection was based in Canberra, works were to be available nationwide, with generous loans to interstate exhibitions. Mollison also articulated the gallery's acquisition policy, which further developed the policy articulated in the ***Lindsay Report***[62], in various publications – the primary objective was to become a national collection of Australian art, including all aspects of visual art, fulfilling a pedagogic role[63]. Other collecting areas continued, such as art of Asia and South East Asia, primitive art and art of the modern era. The overriding criterion was still that of aesthetic excellence. After the controversial acquisition of Jackson Pollock's *Blue poles* (1952) in September 1973 the National Gallery had become the most famous art institution in the country

---

[61] Radford, Ron '*Vision for the National Gallery of Australia: part one' Artonview*, National Gallery of Australia, Summer 2005 The NGA for example continues to collect and display works by 'Modern masters' and art from South East Asia, whilst retaining only small number of works by European masters.

[62] The *Lindsay Report* (March 1966) argued for a national collection of art that would be housed in a dedicated Australian National Gallery. This collection was to be assembled primarily on the basis of aesthetic merit and focus not only on Australian, including Aboriginal, art, but also with the art of Australia's Asian and Pacific neighbours, as well as worldwide 20th Century art. By this time 1000 art objects had already been acquired or commissioned by the Historic Memorials Committee, and many others belonged to various Commonwealth collections dispersed in different institutions. In 1973 the Commonwealth Advisory Board was replaced by an Acquisitions Committee of the National Gallery of Australia

[63] Through a repository of prints, drawings, sketchbook and other study and reference material for scholars, students and researchers fostering an understanding of the achievements of important artists.

and Mollison had become the highest profile spokesman for the visual arts. "Although items in the so-called 'masterpiece collection' frequently attracted major publicity and political comment and interference, the gallery's real achievement was its hugely significant acquisitions in all areas of Australian art, international printmaking, photography, Russian theatre arts, Asian textiles and applied arts."[64]

The National Gallery's vision was ambitious and ultimately unsustainable. Betty Churcher took on the role of Director of the gallery in difficult circumstances in February 1990[65]. The budget required necessitated a much broader base than that available from government. The encyclopaedic inclusiveness of the collection meant it would be vast, and only a limited number of items could be displayed in the building at any given time. The National Gallery's main building needed renovation[66], major extensions or satellite galleries were required. The gallery's role was shifting - the pendulum was swinging from acquisitions[67] towards imported blockbuster exhibitions. Churcher, during her seven years as Director, presided over twelve international blockbuster exhibitions, some with major scholarly input from gallery curators, with a growth in visitor numbers and revenue. This earned her the nickname of 'Betty Blockbuster'.

Ron Radford, who succeeded the controversial Brian Kennedy as Director of the NGA in 2005, sees the core function of an art museum as 'to preserve, research and interpret works of art, and their accompanying information for the public benefit'. A great art museum therefore, collects and conserves works of aesthetic excellence, researches them rigorously, and interprets works,

---

[64] Grishin, Sasha, '*The Rise and Rise of the National Gallery of Australia', Art and Australia* , Volume 41, Number 2, Summer 2003. Collections of international significance were formed in many areas, which were otherwise unrepresented elsewhere in Australia.

[65] Dr Brian Kennedy's appointment as director in 1997 was not universally welcomed by the Australiana art community, encountering hostility from parts of the media and arts establishment. A new emphasis emerged on access to the national collection through a much wider use of loans to other galleries and Kennedy was also interested in bold and controversial acquisitions of international art, whilst still encouraging popular blockbuster exhibitions and national and international shows.

[66] Between June 1990 and December 1991 a new roof was constructed, mezzanine floors added, the walls clad with veneering and a major new wing proposed. Under Churcher there were also significant staffing cuts and the gallery turned more aggressively to marketing and fundraising, In March 1998 the new wing of the gallery, which had been started under Churcher, opened, providing the gallery with a dedicated temporary exhibition space for the first time.

[67] During the seven year period 16,000 items were added to the collection, with about half of them through gift, rather than through purchase. Both the circumstances and prices for art had changes. Mollison had developing a collection from a fairly small base whilst Churcher was managing the collection at a time when prices had increased and money was scarce. Some significant acquisitions were made during this period.

based on this scholarship, for the museum's audiences. It should be "a powerhouse from which visitors and others can always receive a charge of psychic energy'[68].

Radford, believes the focus on Australian art collection is crucial, representing the full range of Australian art. Collector Ray Wilson's[69] donation of 285 Australian surrealist works (the Wilson-Agapitos Collection) in 2007 admirably filled a gap in the National Gallery's collection. With the possible exception of the Ian Potter Centre: NGV Australia in Melbourne, the National Gallery's essentially linear display of Australian art is the most comprehensive in the country. One sign of the maturity of the gallery has been that the national collection is able to tell the story of Australia art more comprehensively and in most of its manifestations. "It can explain how it developed within our geographic neighbourhood and within an international artistic context, and today more than ever before, a greater number of Australians have access to this story."[70]

Apart from the Australian collection, the National Gallery also has many other strengths, including the sole strong 20th century European and American collection to be found not only in Australia but also in the Asia-Pacific region. Radford is trying to define the Gallery as a national institution with a sharp gaze on the Asia Pacific region. The Asian collections also have considerable strength, with an emphasis on India and South-East Asia. There is a small quality collection of art from Australia's near Pacific neighbours. No state gallery concentrates on art, past and present of the Pacific region, though the Queensland Gallery has developed an interest in contemporary art in the region and has committed significant resources to the Asia Pacific Triennial. The Melbourne and Sydney galleries have a particularly interest in North Asian art, rather than South-East Asian art, and Brisbane concentrates on contemporary Asia-Pacific art. Whilst the National Gallery has some significant Middle Eastern and Mughal Islamic holdings, only Adelaide has a sizeable Middle Eastern Islamic collection.

---

[68] Radford, Ron *'Vision for the National Gallery of Australia: part one' Artonview*, National Gallery of Australia, Summer 2005

[69] Ray Wilson was also a Trustee of the Art Gallery of NSW Foundation

[70] Grishin, Sasha *'The Rise and rise of the National Gallery of Australia', Art and Australia,* Volume 41, Number 2 Summer 2003

In 2000, the then Director Brian Kennedy, announced a design competition to rethink the entrance and to improve public access and the visual profile of the Gallery within the existing 'cultural precinct'. After considerable controversy, the new Director Ron Radford expanded the brief in 2005 to include a suite of new galleries, particularly to display the astonishing and underexposed collection of Indigenous art. These new galleries were finally opened in early October 2010.

One of the overwhelming problems with the current building had been that Australian art was been confined to the relatively small and inaccessible low-ceiling area upstairs. In 2001 there had been a significant change in the presentation of Australian art at the Gallery, based on a philosophy that sculpture, graphics and photography, as well as furnishings and the applied arts, should be given a 'strong voice' alongside the paintings. The overriding principle is aesthetic excellence. Consideration is then given to the object's historical significance and its relationship with other objects within the designated spaces. The controversial building program more recently planned and completed at the National Gallery of Australia was conceived to facilitate the display of Australian visual culture more accessibly, attractively and expansively. Stage One was to do this for Indigenous Australian art. At the new ground floor entrance there is a specifically customised area, to the right of the door, for the 1988 ***Aboriginal Memorial*** of 200 ceremonial poles, one of the most significant works in the collection. Displayed in a way that relates to the outside landscaping, it would be the first major work of art encountered by visitor..

There is a good case for the prominence given to the NGA's Indigenous holdings. This is the most uniquely Australian segment of the collection, attracting the greatest interest from international visitors. It's the unlikely combination of extreme age and newness that has allowed Aboriginal art to capture the imagination of audiences around the world. Immediately above the new entrance and facilities, eleven specially created galleries, each of which is designed to accommodate the needs of specific types of Indigenous Australian art[71] providing a concentrated overview of the diversity of Indigenous art. "The explosion of creativity that has taken place over the last 30 years is astonishing, and many of the greatest works by the most celebrated artists

[71] These will be the first galleries in Australia designed around the specific needs of displaying different aspects of Indigenous Australian art.

have ended up in the NGA collection"[72]. These, perhaps overcrowded, galleries connect with existing galleries on the main level.

It is envisaged that Stage Two will similarly redisplay the rest of Australian and Australasian art. Sidney Nolan's famous Ned Kelly series, are to be displayed in its own space, and will be among the first works encountered on the principal display floor. Nearby small spaces are to be allocated to the display of decorative arts and photography. Chronologically-arranged galleries will proceed, after an introductory gallery showing 18th and 19th century European art in the Pacific, from the colonial period onwards. Adjacent to these galleries will be small side galleries for works on paper[73], textiles, design and decorative arts. It is hoped that the new wing will attract major private collections that could help complete aspects of the national collection. The Gallery aims to present the collection in such a way that Australian art can and should be considered as 'art of the highest international calibre, which can be rightly considered as on a par with the best creations of other contemporary cultures."[74] For John MacDonald "from that moment of entry you are now, but for the first time, in no doubt that this is Australia's gallery and that Australia is not just a colonial entity but a land with its own, particular spiritual resonance."[75]

Temporary exhibitions, particularly 'blockbusters', engage the public and media with the National Gallery, providing in-depth access to artists, periods or themes, and providing visitors with fresh insights not readily available in the permanent collection. Ron Radford plans to mount at least one significant blockbuster each year. Planning seems not to have adequately prepared for the overwhelming popular success of the 2010 exhibition of post-impressionist. The associated public programs form another level of connection with audiences. Over time the exhibition program should create a balance between traditional and contemporary art, and

---

[72] McDonald, John *' Too much of a good thing: It's hard to fully appreciate a magnificent collection in its new, rather crowded home' The Sydney Morning Herald* (Weekend Edition) 23-24 October 2010

[73] Watercolours, drawings, prints and photographs. The National Gallery of Australia claims to have the finest and largest collection of Australian works on paper. Such galleries are especially important fort he periods of Australian art in which works on paper are artistically stronger and more numerous than mainstream paintings.

[74] Grishin, Sasha, *'Australian Art at the National Gallery of Australia', The World of Antiques & Art*, February-July2003

[75] McDonald, John *'Watch this space: Brutalism meets beauty in the National Gallery's new wing' The Sydney Morning Herald* (Weekend Edition) 9-10 October 2010

between European, Asian, Pacific and Australian art. The program should complement the collections, both paralleling the collections' strengths and also bringing in elements absent from the collections. The Gallery has a particular role in developing and displaying innovative exhibitions of Australian artists, movements or periods, especially those that may have been previously neglected.

Public institutions in particular have taken advantage of national commemorations linked to the 1988 Bicentennial, the 2000 Olympics and the Centenary of Federation. The number and range of cultural events linked to these commemorations would indicate that they have some significance, at least "in the sense that national identity is still being actively constructed by officially sponsored cultural institutions"[76].

The celebration of 100 years of nationhood presented a unique opportunity to reflect on the events and achievements of that century and the evolution of Australian cultural identity. The Centenary of Federation Council allocated $9.2 million to over 120 projects, chosen without public accountability from hundreds of submissions. The visual artists promoted – or at least named - in centerpiece events were generally very famous and dead, and mostly white males i.e. recognizable to 'ordinary Australian men and women'[77]. This may underestimate these people and the breadth of their knowledge, interest and willingness to learn. No woman artist had a significant place in the new 'people's history', but the artist of the century was "the only Aboriginal name known to most Australians, Albert Namatjira, was flogged at every centrepiece event."[78] The living artist hero was the cartoonist Michael Leunig, the only visual artist to make an appearance in the ***Peoplescape*** concert, representing the more than 200 artist-subjects among the thousands of images of 'ordinary Australians who have done extraordinary things'[79] making up the ***Peoplescape*** project, the Centenary of Federation's final centerpiece event. ***Yeperenye***,

---

[76] Millner, Jacqueline, '*Curating Australia for the Centenary of Federation*', *Continuum: Journal of Media & Cultural Studies* Vol. 16. No 1 2002

[77] Kerr, Joan, '*Artless history or the spectacular results of Centenary of Federation funding*', *Art Monthly Australia* No.148 April 2002

[78] Kerr, Joan, *'Artless history or the spectacular results of Centenary of Federation funding'*, *Art Monthly Australia* No.148 April 2002

[79] Any member of the public could nominate his or her Australian hero – dead or alive, forgotten or famous – then decorate a plastic template if their nomination was successful. The degree of genuine broad-based grass roots involvement is questionable.

the indigenous arts' festival in Alice Springs initiated and organised by the Central Australian Aboriginal Media Association (CAAMA) had a degree of success because it was primarily visual in concept and execution.

Joan Kerr argues that the ***Peoplescape*** event provides an interesting comparison with the well funded museum displays that "assumed that original art can convey nothing to anyone – apart from those despised 'elite' art audiences, of course – unless assisted by 'stories' i.e. swamped by words. The belief that exhibitions with popular appeal are best conceived and organised by museum curators with no art expertise simply leads to wordy stories, dull histories and biographies and incoherent, overloaded displays."[80] In Australia there seems to be a tendency to accept, if not admire, the élite status and ambition of our sporting heroes, whilst being suspicious of cultural or intellectual élites. Diversity was the official justification for Centenary of Federation grants, with little regard for overall balance or public accountability. The uncoordinated nature of Centenary of Federation events was extraordinary in what was meant to be a celebration of national unity. Most were unseen outside the beneficiary's usual circle and records are often non-existent or maintained locally. "The lack of a central archive was a greater enemy to creating a genuine popular history than any conspiracy of elitists could ever be. The split between art and history was equally destructive."[81]

The National Gallery of Australia's officially endorsed exhibition ***Federation: Australian Art and Society 1901-2001***[82] charted a narrative of the period, including some of the best-known icons and a number of less familiar works with eight separate thematic groupings – each one described as a 'slice of Australia' and "a reflection of the transformations that have occurred in Australian society during the century since Federation."[83] The curator, John McDonald, sought to present, at least to some degree, the complex nature of the discourse through the 20th century. The value of the exhibition was subject to considerable debate, often negative. Bruce James for example, argued that there were too many works, too few of them were first rate and, by and

[80] Kerr, Joan, *'Artless history or the spectacular results of Centenary of Federation funding'*, *Art Monthly Australia*, No 148 April 2002

[81] Kerr, Joan, *'Artless history or the spectacular results of Centenary of Federation funding'*, *Art Monthly Australia*, No.148 April 2002

[82] After closing at the National Gallery in Canberra the exhibition toured Melbourne, Townsville, Newcastle, Perth, Darwin and Launceston during 2001.

[83] Grishin, Sasha, *'Iconic portraits of a changing nation'*, *The Canberra Times*, 2 September 2000

large, they were badly hung[84] indicating that the project was rushed and not well thought through – the result being a disappointing exhibition experience for many visitors. It is interesting to see how this representation of Australia differs from that presented in the context of other significant national commemorations, particularly the 1988 Bicentennial and the 2000 Olympics, and the roles these exhibitions play in the ongoing construction of national identity. Debates continue about the degree to which they in fact represent deliberate mechanisms to construct a national identity, or are more reflective of reactions to other societal pressures and shifts in the community's perception of itself? The success of these mechanisms in contributing to, celebrating or reflecting the national identity has been the subject of some degree of criticism. Exhibitions that attempt to tell the political and social history of Australia through art, and are bound to fail in this objective if the works are selected primarily for their aesthetic impact and art historical significance, rather than their social or commemorative significance.

There had been a number of significant exhibitions of Aboriginal art during 1988, including important statements by the newly established urban Koori group based in Boomalli artists' cooperative in central Sydney. An installation of 200 burial poles[85] from the Ramingining community in Central Australia formed the centre piece of the ***Australian Biennale: From the Southern Cross***, became part of the permanent Australian art exhibit in the Australian National Gallery. It has also been exhibited in Europe.

The National Gallery of Australia, with its collections largely formed in the last quarter of the 20th century, was not in a position to emulate the national museums or the European 'Old World', nor to duplicate the collections formed from the mid-19th century onwards in the six colonial capitals and some of the larger older regional galleries such as Ballarat (established 1884), Bendigo (established 1887), Warnambool (established 1886), Geelong (established 1890) and Launceston (established 1891), which have collections that survey the full sweep of Australian art history. Regional galleries in Newcastle and Armidale, for example, have developed similarly broad collections.

---

[84] *Federation: Australian Art and Society 1901-2001*, Michael Cathcart interviews Bruce James (12 December 2000) (http://www.abc.net.au/rn/arts/atoday/stories/s222202.htm)

[85] One pole from every year of 'dispossession'

The role of regional galleries, as with the state and national public institutions, is to maintain, conserve, display and promote art, but in the regional context there is also a bias towards serving the needs of the local area and community development[86], and representing local artists as much as possible in the broader context of Australian art. The collections held in regional art galleries throughout Australia contain many key Australian art works as well as some unexpected holdings, and, because of their size, need to work with the larger better-funded institutions. Most regional and municipal galleries have been established since 1950 and have limited collections or have developed acquisition policies focussing on specialist areas, such as textiles and fibres, ceramics or works on paper. The Devonport Regional Art Gallery[87], for example has been collecting art, craft and design, and representing local practitioners, since its establishment in 1966. At this level, a number of existing institutions were redeveloped in the 1970s, and many new institutions emerged, predominantly for art and local history.

The development of a State gallery, like the Art Gallery of New South Wales, provides fascinating glimpses into the cultural history of the city in which it is based. Cultural idealism – the promotion of the fine arts through lectures, art classes and regular exhibitions – was only one contributing factor leading to the foundation of the Art Gallery of New South Wales. The precise date of the gallery's foundation is debatable, but administratively the gallery owes its genesis to the New South Wales Academy of Art in 1871[88]. Different forces shaped the development of cultural institutions in Sydney and Melbourne, and the Victorian and NSW galleries are the largest and most significant of the state collections. Despite some commonality, these differences were profound in revealing ways. The traditional rivalry between Sydney and Melbourne was just as important – Melbourne had established an art gallery in 1861 – prompting a fairly pragmatic hope that "the foundation of an Art Academy would elevate the city beyond bucolic

[86] City and municipal councils tend to justify their expenditure in terms of getting people (i.e. voters and ratepayers) through the door. Directors and curatorial staff in these galleries are often engaged in extensive fundraising and the cultivation of donors

[87] There are no private galleries in Devonport of Burnie, despite active art practitioners in the region. There was one private gallery in Sheffield but it wasn't viable. If there were private galleries this would take some of the pressure off the Regional Gallery to represent local groups and artists.

[88] On 24 April 1871 a public meeting was held to establish an Academy of art. At the first 'Conversazione' The first artistic soirée was held on 7 August 1871 much of the talk was of recent European turmoil. The rhetoric touched on the possibility of a young Australia having to 'carry the torch or culture, even as Europe degenerated into chaos'. From 1872 to 1879 the Academy's main activity was to organize annual exhibitions. In November 1880 the Academy dissolved itself stating its aims had been achieved in the foundation of a public gallery. The National Art Gallery of New South Wales was incorporated by an Act of Parliament in 1899.

and mercantile pursuits'[89]. In their early periods, both galleries acquired expensive contemporary British art – little notable Australian art was purchased by the NSW gallery prior to 1889 when Julian Ashton, who established the fundamental character of the Australian collection, was appointed to the Gallery. In the climate of nationalism prior to Federation, the painting of the Australian landscape became particularly desirable. This was a significant period of acquisition of Australian art – a collection enhanced by further acquisitions. During the years between Federation and World War II especially, many artists "found themselves torn between the lure of an exciting universal language which promised to extinguish the tyranny of distance, and a sense that they also belonged to somewhere in particular."[90]. The collection today reflects the shifts during this modernist period but only because of later acquisition policies. Edmond Capon, Director of the NSW gallery, describes a programme of acquisitions that was established 'that ensured the evolution of a collection that reflects the history and character of mainstream non-Indigenous art."[91]

Hall Missingham, who became Director in 1944 promoted the education programmes and professionalism that would vitalise the Gallery's relationship with the community. He also supported the recognition of the most important artists of the time through acquisitions and definitive retrospectives – in particular, Russell Drysdale, William Dobell and Sidney Nolan. Through Deputy Director, Tony Tuckson came the impetus to build one of Australia's most important Aboriginal art collections, which developed further particularly in the latter decades of the 20th century.

Melbourne, with its lofty ambition to implement a policy based on 'art as an instrument of education and social improvement inevitably established the first and most significant collection of European Masters of international repute in Australia, and the 1904 Felton Bequest[92] enabled

---

[89] *'AGNSW-About Us –History'* (http://artgallery.nsw.gov.au/aboutus/index.php4?p=19 (13/07/01)

[90] Pearce, Barry '*Introduction'*, Pearce, Barry (Ed) *Australian Art in the Art Gallery of New South Wales (*Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney 2000) p 12

[91] Capon, Edmond *'Foreword'*, Pearce, Barry (Ed) *Australian Art in the Art Gallery of New South Wales (*Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney 2000) p 9

[92] The Bequest specified that the committee could purchase only 'works and art objects' it judged to have an 'educational value and to be calculated to raise and improve public taste' – Felton's intentions were not always easy to carry out. The NGV now had unprecedented purchasing power independent of taxpayer funding. Overall the initial acquisitions were conservative or lacked focus, with some extraordinary exceptions. Inflation has eroded the income from the Felton Bequest even though its capital has multiplied many times.

the NGV's Trustees to make many astute international purchases, whilst Sydney acquired an Australian collection better aligned with the city's identity as 'the origin of European settlement in the Antipodes, and a city of sensual physical attraction; a city which would be eternally in love with exhibitionism and the influential presence of influential artists."[93]

In 1997, when it was clear that the National Gallery of Victoria needed additional space, the decision was made to split the collections, housing the Australian collections at Federation Square and to refurbish the St Kilda Road premises to accommodate the international collections. Whilst the Ian Potter Centre provides spaces and facilities unparalleled in any other Australian art institution, it could be seen as, perhaps rather than isolating Australian art, at least making it more difficult to present and appreciate Australian art in an international context, or to be exposed to the dialogues between Australian and international artists.

One of the significant challenges for the National Gallery of Victoria (NGV) is the extraordinary breadth of its collection. Apart from issues of available storage and gallery space, and the conservation demands of such a diverse collection, this has created problems as dwindling funds are available to a number of departments. Operating costs and prices for acquisitions continue to rise, and, like other galleries, the NGV has been forced to look to alternate sources of income, especially as government funding is less and less assured. The proposition that galleries might undertake joint acquisitions[94] gained some credibility when the idea was floated in 2004 as a means of purchasing important Australian and international works, not affordable by individual institutions, sharing custody and curatorial responsibility, and having these works available for public display. The work of significant artists, is not only expensive, but is becoming available less and less often. The logistics of shared ownership can be difficult in practice, but the benefits can be very positive if it is well-managed.

---

[93] Pearce, Barry (Ed), *Australian Art in the Gallery of New South Wales* (Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney 2000) p.12

[94] Marten, Lauren, *'Joint custody gets a new framework', The Sydney Morning Herald*, 10 November 2004. In Britain, joint acquisitions have increased since the Victoria and Albert Museum and Scotland's National Gallery together bought Antonio Canova's 'The Three Graces' in the mid 1990s for £7.5 million

Despite the success of recent exhibitions, and the fanfare surrounding the opening of the Ian Potter Centre[95] and Federation Square precinct in November 2002, and the renovations to the St Kilda Road building[96], the National Gallery of Victoria, for example, has announced it will be closing one day a week as a result of deficits over recent years.[97] This erosion of Australia's traditional policy of having most museums and galleries open seven days a week is a disaster according to John McDonald, by making Australia's biggest and best art collection inaccessible for fifty two days a year. McDonald sees it as a test of Melbourne's claim to be Australia's centre for culture and the arts. Unfortunately the touring blockbusters are expensive to procure, promote and mount[98] and Art Exhibitions Australia[99] rather than the galleries take the largest portion of the profits.

The National Gallery of Victoria is conscious that its prestige is under challenge by the rapid development and increasing profile, of the National Gallery of Australia (NGA), even though the NGA seeks to minimize conflicts over acquisition policies. The Victorian gallery remains the last of the State-based galleries to cling to the 'National' appellation in its title, even though the Canberra gallery is well established.

Two persistent themes emerge from any review of the role of museums in the development of, and debate surrounding, national identity: – the necessity for more focussed and coordinated acquisition policies that are well articulated and accountable to the public, and a recognition of the complementary nature of Australia's national collections as they collect and service both the larger national and their local audiences. Museums have developed in relative isolation for

---

[95] The Ian Potter: NGV Australia houses the Australian collections of the National Gallery of Victoria. The Centre is part of the Federation Square complex that rose over the Princes Bridge rail yards on the south side of Melbourne's city grid on land traditionally owned by the Wurundjeri people. An international competition was held to design a structure for the site to mark the centenary of Federation and the 1901 establishment of the Commonwealth of Australia. Construction began in 1998.

[96] The rapid development of the collection saw the NGV outgrow its accommodation at the State Library site, and in 1968 the gallery moved to a new building of its own on St Kilda Road., and by 1997 it was clear it needed additional gallery space.

[97] $1.9 million deficit in 2004/05 & losses of $6..8 million in 2003/04; The National Gallery of Australia has an operating cost of more than $2 million; the Art Gallery of NSW and the Queensland Art Gallery have both indicated that there budgets do not meet their needs; many regional galleries face similar problems, for example, the New England Regional Museum in Armidale. .

[98] Advertising, freight and handling costs are offset by sponsorship, by catalogue sales and merchandise. The Federal Government picks up the insurance bill.

[99] Art Exhibitions Australia is the international touring group, operating since 1980

historical reasons, attempting to serve the needs of their communities within the limited resources available to them. Museums generally cannot justify acquiring items in areas better covered by other institutions. Whilst audiences are also often willing to travel – and cultural tourism is heavily promoted in some areas - part of the answer lies in the further development of a circuit for regular touring of both exhibitions and individual items from the larger collections. Professional forums, such as the Australian Gallery Director's Council and the Art Museums Association of Australia, facilitate some degree of cooperation. There has also been a strong tradition of cooperative research among Australian museums and State galleries have cooperated in mounting exhibitions. Whilst the Australian National Gallery has tried to tailor its acquisitions policy to complement the strengths of existing collections, as the national collection develop, some degree of overlap is inevitable, particularly with gifts and bequests. A level of competitive rivalry is inevitable with the institutions keen both develop their collections and to maximise prestige and reputation.

Material and visual culture, as produced and collected, expresses identity – whether individual or collective – and the way in which a community, even a nation, chooses to present itself through its museums, especially its publicly accessible museums, reflects something of how that community wants to be seen. The museum sector provides both material input and environments for the formulation, expression and debate around national identity. Shifts in discussion and perceptions around 'nationhood' are also recorded in a multitude of ways – part of the role of museums is to preserve significant shifts and to present and interpret these shifts to audiences in ways that shed light on Australian national identity and Australia's place in the world, as well as promote and stimulate debate and interest. Whilst these institutions need to be accountable, especially if they are in receipt of funds from the public purse, issues arise in terms of determining the agenda. Governments, bureaucrats and politicians, private collectors and donors, even academics and critics, may want to control the debate, ultimately it the public must be at least a major player in determining the 'national identity', how it will shift and be presented. The role of the public museum is to provide access to and interpretation of material culture in ways that will inform and challenge perceptions and stimulate ongoing debate as the 'nation' itself develops and changes.

# WHERE THE BLOODY HELL ARE WE?
# THE AUSTRALIAN LANDSCAPE

Historians' interest in the meanings of land, landscape and place has burgeoned in recent years. Rather than holding an inherent or intrinsic meaning , it has become clear that attitudes to the surrounding environment as something created through a range of representations – written, visual, musical etc. Understandings and representations of landscape will shift with time. "Interest in ideas about land and landscape are also indicative of the continuing search to understand the ways in which predominantly Anglo-Australians have understood what it might mean to be 'Australian'"[100]

"Landscape", according to Barry Pearce from the Art Gallery of NSW, "more than any other subject matter reminds us of the solitariness of the painter. Interiors reflect the reassurance of a self-protected world. Figure compositions imply an engagement with other people. So much of the imagery of landscape, however, has grown out of an apprehension of nature as a detached and distant entity; an entity nevertheless capable of stirring the most elemental of emotions. In Australia, with a disjunction between pockets of civilisation in which most non-indigenous people live and the spacious continent that continues to reside in their collective imagination, this sentiment touches with pertinence on the way artists have depicted the land."[101] Landscape retains a persistent presence in the history of Australian art, in the collections of our public museums, and, at least to some degree, in the community's collective memory..

Relative isolation has to some extent shaped Australia's history. The notion of a southern land distant from the main centres of world civilisation long appealed to Europeans. Artists have responded to, and represented that fascination. There is something captivating about it being both the oldest and the newest continent on earth, untouched by European and American traditions prior to 1788. "If there is a stored power in landscape that civilisation so far has not managed to obliterate – an invisible magnetism, a magic even in the atmosphere, which makes you feel the

---

[100] Holmes, Katie *'In spite of it all, the garden still stands: Gardens, Landscape and Cultural History' '* , Tsu and White (Eds) *Cultural History in Australia,* 2003 p172

[101] Pearce, Barry *'Earth, Sky and Paint'*, Pearce, Barry (Ed) *Australian Art in the Gallery of New South Wales* (Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, 2000) p. 149

old, old root of human consciousness, just lurking beyond the range of our white vision – it exists to remind us that for at least 40,000 years the only Australians were black..."[102]. Many artists, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous retain a speculative vision about Australia, especially those who focus on landscape – a combination of topography and the outcome of imagination. The landscape's distinctiveness, largely based on its unique flora and fauna, has combined to provides a basis for claims of cultural distinctiveness.

John Olsen argues that the Australian landscape hasn't been artistically defined because we are "a very young civilisation...in a very, very old landscape"[103] and have been intimidated by it. Olsen acknowledges that whilst Australian indigenous artists have been artistically interpreting the land for thousands of years, non-indigenous Australians are unable to relate to these works in the same way as we can to works in the European tradition. For a long time after European settlement the idea of Australia retained a fictional life that far outstripped any logical reasoning. Many believe that it still does. Visual depictions of the landscape are tangible objects specifically portraying places and items which can be possessed, and many artists, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous retain a speculative vision about Australia, especially those who focus on landscape – a combination of topography and the outcome of imagination.

Traditionally, the landscape has been considered as constant, eternal and timeless, and valued in those terms as part of a national heritage. On the other hand, modern life was seen as a transient ever-changing experience, generally the outcome of initiatives of industrially more advanced countries. There is also a view that country life as embodying traditional values and virtues while the city presumes 'the modern' and technological. More often than not the 'picturing' of the landscape has been the vehicle "whereby modernist practice has achieved a local meaning, inspiring the vernacular forms in which modernism has been practised in Australia."[104]

Visual art has been an important way of giving form and expression to new circumstances and developments. A new and more intimate vision of the Australian landscape has become increasingly evident in painting in the latter part of the 20th century. The traditional view

---

[102] Gablic, Suzi *'Report from Australia (Part 1)' Art & Australia* Vol. 18, No 3 Autumn 1981, pp 249-259
[103] Meacham, Steve *'Paintings that find words for the land' The Sydney Morning Herald,* 13th October 2004
[104] Burn, Ian *National Life & Landscapes: Australian Painting 1900-1940* (Bay Books, Sydney, 1990) p. 9

successfully portrayed by Arthur Streeton, Tom Roberts and their followers had over the years become hackneyed by derivative painters. The reaction against what was seen as conventionally beautiful in the landscape subsequently led a number of artists to seek out and depict the less attractive aspects of the country. This trend in turn was at risk of becoming conventional so there was a further re-orientation towards what might be termed a 'worm's-eye view' observing the tangle of the undergrowth.. Contemporary artists continue to revisit the genre with new, diverse interpretations, proving the strong hold that the landscape continues to have over the Australian imagination. These visions of Australia are no less valid or authentic than earlier or alternate representations, such as those formulated by Indigenous artists. There is a sense in which Australians seem to think of the past in terms of romantic, nostalgic and idealised views of the outback, and the 'present in terms of the instability of the postmodern city and the coast.

Times have changed and so have artists' points of view. Shifts within Australian art involve a complex group of factors – far more than mere changing taste or fashion or swapping of stylistic allegiances, or even technological advances or historical developments. Shifts have informed the acquisition of works by national, state and regional galleries and museums.

Most State and regional galleries were well-established by the 1920s, many already by the late 19th century. Taste, and hence collecting policies, generally favoured British academic art and a number of important examples therefore entered Australian collections, such as Corot's *'Bent Tree'* purchased in 1907 by the National Gallery of Victoria. Collecting did, however include other national schools[105]. Prior to World War 1 it was rare to hear complaints that these collecting policies were too conservative or old-fashioned.

Major changes have also occurred in the perceived relationship with international artistic centres. Within the comparatively isolated artistic community with few outstanding works in Australian collections, particular paintings exerted widespread influence. From the 'centre of the Empire' the colonies were seen as important markets and the predominance of British art in Australian collections has had considerable impact on the development of Australian art. Until the late

[105] The National Gallery of Victoria, with its generous Felton Bequest, acquires a number of 'Old Master' European works.

1930s international recognition was mainly sought in London, reflecting something of the ongoing Anglo-centric view in Australia..

In 1898 a milestone exhibition of Australian art, mostly chosen from the Art Gallery of New South Wales (AGNSW) and from Sydney collectors by the AGNSW trustees, was held at the Grafton Gallery, London. This exhibition of 371 works was seen as a 'coming of age' of Australian art on the eve of Federation. Whilst critics observed that there was something distinct about the Australian landscapes, most reviewers sought to connect Australian artists with their British counterparts. The Australian artists were delighted with the British attention, and the Melbourne and Sydney press made it clear it was important to win the approval of the British press in London.

In the years after Federation, through the tough experiences of war and depression, pictures played a vital role in creating and reflecting the national self-image. Landscapes in particular became a valuable and popular symbol of Australia. The first three decades of the 20th century, after the recovery from the depression of the 1890s and before the impact of the 1929 economic crisis, saw the gradual development of a boom in Australian art. A vital factor in the art boom was the emergence of quality art publishing[106].which widened the audience for Australian art and popularised the achievements of Australia artists. From the 'Federation' landscapes of artists like McCubbin and Hilder to the post-war 'pastoral ideals' of Penleigh Boyd. McInness, Streeton, Gruner, and Heyson, and then to the barren 'outback' imagery of Drysdale and Nolan, the shifts in representation have complex social and aesthetic significance.

Australian nation makers tended to focus on the land itself as shrewish and bizarre. They were inclined to dwell on the pioneers' failure to civilise and subdue the wilderness, and white women were rendered more peripheral in the heroic fight. Few individuals ever seemed peacefully at home in the land. References to biblical or classical texts helped embalm this mythology, where indigenous people were not so much absent as present as foils. Primitive, treacherous and

[106] The watershed was 1916 when the magazine 'Art in Australia' was launched by Sydney Ure Smith, Charles Lloyd Jones and Bertram Stevens. It continued in publication until 1942. Books on Australian artists started to be published, including quality reproductions, and colour reproductions became available as popular prints.

cunning, they were seen as part of the uncivilised New World."[107] This was despite the extensive exploitation of Indigenous skills, which were also sometimes copied and usurped.

In 1949 Kenneth Clarke questioned[108] whether landscape painting could ever return to its dominant position. The National Gallery of Australia's 1998 exhibition, '***New Worlds From Old: 19th Century Australian and American Landscapes***'[109], was a comparison between the art of two 19th century frontier societies – Australia and the United States. The final theme of the '***New Worlds From Old***' exhibition explored the portrayal of the heroic figure in the landscape and the way that the city became an interesting subject for landscape painters towards the end of the century. This had been the era of the Heidelberg School, tapping into an ongoing interest, perhaps romanticism for the work of this period..

Although the work of the Heidelberg school had its roots in Australian and European art, it represented the first distinctly Australian school of art, though John Glover, who had settled in Tasmania in the 1830s appreciated the Australian landscape and often painted it 'with real joy and heart'. The work of Louis Buvelot, the Swiss-born artist who arrived in Australia in 1865, was vital to the development of a national school of landscape painting, influencing both Frederick McCubbin and Tom Roberts. This period was crucial in Australia's development as the colonies moved towards independence to Federation, and developments in establishing museums in the colonies and the work produced during this time reflected these shifts.

There was a newly gained sense of nationhood and the emerging sense of a national identity. The first trade unions and the Labor Party were established. The women's movement emerged, campaigning for equal rights. Feminist concerns became part of public debate. The Heidelberg School painters had forged a view of landscape derived partly from the anti-industrial sentiments of an increasingly industrialised environment. By the 1920s this pastoral image had become the

---

[107] Kociumbas, Jan *'Performances:Indigenisation and postcolonial culture'* Tsu, and White (Eds), *Cultural History in Australia* , 2003 p. 129

[108] Clarke, Kenneth *Landscape into Art*

[109] Exhibition dates: to 17th May 1998 National Gallery of Australia, Canberra; 3rd June to 10th August 1998 National Gallery of Victoria; 12th September 1998 to 4th January 1999 Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford CT; 26th January to 18th April 1999 The Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington DC

expression of a particular national form, consolidated within the emergent cultural institutions[110]. "In that climate, the landscape became one of the vehicles for revalidating the bush ethos incorporating the Anzac myth."[111]

***'Golden Summers: Heidelberg and beyond'***[112] was an exhibition (1986) that focused on a brief but significant period in Melbourne and Sydney during the 1880s and 1890s, highlighting the Australian landscape and light. Internationally 'Impressionism' was challenging established concepts of landscape painting in particular, concerned primarily with the representation of light through colour. Even allowing for the dominance of landscape, the *'Heidelberg'* painters introduced a variety of subject-matter in their work – still life, portrait, allegory and symbolism, and subject painting. It provided a picture of what is generally regarded as 'the first flowering of a truly Australian national school of painting'.

The ***'Bohemians in the Bush'***[113] exhibition in 1991 brought together the work of about 15 Australian artists who lived and worked in artists' camps in the Mosman area in the 1880s and 1890s. The exhibition revealed the shifting painting practices of Sydney artists in the late 19th century. The artists of associated with the Mosman camps were among those promoting the social and cultural changes of these decades. The art practices associated with Melbourne's 'Heidelberg School, were also developed by artists in Sydney.

Only three of the artists represented in ***'Between the bush and the boudoir'***[114] – Frederick McCubbin, Tom Roberts, Charles Condor, Girolamp Nerli, John Russell, Julian Ashton and Emmanuel Phillips Fox – were Australian born. Six out of the seven studied and spent many years in Europe, rather than in Australia. Like Australian artists before and since, they looked

---

[110] The Australian Commonwealth Government, for example, has been collecting art since shortly after the Commonwealth Art Advisory Board was established in 1912, to advise the Historic Memorials Committee on portrait commissions of distinguished Australians. The Board soon began to commission and buy Australian landscape paintings, receive gifts and lobby for a National Gallery. Most early acquisitions made by the Commonwealth Government for the national collections emphasized topography and iconography and were given into the custody of the Parliamentary Library or, later, the National Library.

[111] Burn, Ian *"Sidney Nolan: Landscape and modern life"* Butler, Rex (Ed) *Radical Revisionism: An Anthology of Writings on Australian Art* (IMA 2005)

[112] Exhibition dates: 23rd February to 20th April 1986 (toured to National Gallery of Victoria, Art Gallery of South Australia and Art Gallery of Western Australia)

[113] Exhibition dates: 6th June to 25th August 1991 Art Gallery of New South Wales

[114] Exhibition dates: to 22nd September 1996 National Gallery of Australia, Canberra

outside for experience, inspiration, ideas and recognition The artists who were to become the Heidelberg School however were to create some of Australia's most pervasive cultural myths, and this exhibition explored the emerging character of Australian Impressionism through content and style.

***'Completing the Picture: Women Artists of the Heidelberg Era'***[115] was an exhibition that brought a fresh look at a much loved period of Australian art. This exhibition looks at works produced by some of the professionally trained women were studying and working alongside the male artists who became known as the 'Heidelberg School'. Over half of the 80 works have been drawn from private collections and have not been shown for most of the 20th century. Unlike their male counterparts, these artists are largely unknown. Jane Sutherland is perhaps the best known – her work was included in the ***'Golden Summers'*** exhibition in 1986.[116]

The ***Australian Impressionism*** exhibition, an extraordinarily popular exhibition at the National Gallery of Victoria in 2007, took up the story again limiting its attention to the period between 1883 when Tom Roberts worked briefly at Julian's Academy in Paris and visited Spain[117] and 1897 when Arthur Streeton left Australia for London, symbolically marking the end of the first phase of Impressionism[118], although the group had actually fractured some years before. Whilst a unique alignment of factors ensured that the movement was launched in prosperous and cosmopolitan Melbourne, the Art Gallery of New South Wales was the first art gallery in the country to actively acquire paintings by the Australian Impressionists purchasing Conder's ***'Departure of the Orient'*** as early as 1888 and Streeton's ***'Still glides the stream'*** in 1890. The significant role played by Sydney is evident in that a number of the works celebrated the city and its environs. Many of the artists had been directly connected to the National Gallery of Victoria

---

[115] Exhibition dates: 3rd March to 27th April 1992 Heide Park and Art Gallery; 15th May to 28th June 1992 Ballarat Fine Art Gallery; 12th July to 9th August 1992 Castlemaine Art Gallery; 28th August to 27th September 1992 Benalla Art Gallery

[116] Emma Minnie Beckett Boyd was the matriarch of one of Australia's great artistic families; Jessie Evans, a talented landscape painter, exhibited only briefly in the 1890s; several others ran studios, formed societies and organized exhibitions and painting expeditions for women to the bush on the outskirts of Melbourne.

[117] In the company of the Paris-trained Spanish artists Ramon Casas and Laurea Barrau, his Melbourne friend Dr William Maloney and John Russell, the only Australian painter to be directly in touch with Monet and mainstream Impressionism.

[118] The principal artists in the first phase were Tom Roberts, Charles Conder, Arthur Streeton, Fred McCubbin and Jane Sutherland The exhibition does not extend to major figures of the second phase of plein-air painting, such as David Davies, Emmanuel Phillips Fox and Walter Withers

(NGV) which was slow to acquire key works by these artists. Even though the NGV had purchased Streeton's ***'The purple moon's transparent might'*** in 1896, it preferred to dedicate its limited acquisition funds to contemporary European academic art. With the establishment of the Felton Bequest in 1904/05 the NGV turned its attention to Australian art, concentration on the very contemporary rather than works from the end of the previous century. Significant works from the Australian Impressionists were only acquired in more recent decades.

Works by these artists continue to engage gallery staff and visitors. Australia's "isolation from Europe and the county's distinctive landscape and sunny climate, give Australian Impressionism an intensity and radiance that make it remarkable even in the international setting.[119]" The Tom Roberts exhibition, held at the Art Gallery of New South Wales in 1997, which included two great Australian icons – ***Shearing the Rams*** (1888-90) and ***The Golden Fleece*** (1894) – was the first retrospective of his work in fifty years. Throughout his life, Roberts continued to portray the Australian landscape with warmth and affection.

Arthur Streeton's work is probably more familiar to the Australian public than that of any other Australian artists. His painting ***Fire's On*** (1893) is considered an icon at the Art Gallery of New South Wales (AGNSW), revealing Streeton's identification with the landscape in the romantic and poetic style of the Australian Impressionists. A large-scale retrospective like the 1996 exhibition at the AGNSW[120] has not been organised since 1944. Plans were put in place by the Queensland Art Gallery for about twelve of his paintings to tour western Queensland in 2005, as part of a state-wide tour beginning in April. Gallery staff will also involve local artists and school students in the exhibition.

Virtually no painting of the desert had been done until Hans Heysen went to the Flinders Ranges in 1922. Factors like drought, depression, soil erosion and mechanisation were changing the face of rural industry forever. Younger artists were increasingly interested in the metropolis, and the pastoral vision that had been so central to the national ethos became progressively marginalised. Meanwhile a number of artists, film makers, and writers continued to assert that the nation's

[119] Lane , Terence, *'Introduction', Australian Impressionism* (National Gallery of Victoria) 2007
[120] Exhibition dates; 11th October to 24th November 1996, Art Gallery of New South Wales

spirit somehow resided in frontier experience, with an emphasis on white male athleticism and racial purity fed the cultural dominance of existing pioneer types. Even the continent's 'dead, red centre' was largely imagined as bereft of Aboriginal people, with its surreal, empty landscapes. As well as those artists directly inspired by the ideas and styles of the modernist movement, artists were producing an image of the landscape which served as a modernist symbol of Australia. Some artists were producing traditional pictures of contemporary subjects whilst others were committed to politically progressive modernism. There was also the influential work of Max Meldrum and his followers, which during the 1920s stood for a modern approach to art, and the work of Albert Namatjira and other Aboriginal artists who evolved a modern practice and form through contact with the dominant Western culture.

Hans Heysen had become a dominant figure in the landscape school at this time. Within the dominant landscape tradition, the shift away from the pastoral ideal had created room for the development and appreciation of the work of Albert Namatjira, whose work emerged to public acclaim in the late 1930s. Namatjira mastered the Western idiom in terms of both forms and techniques, but also did not hesitate to change adapt the idiom, making unconventional compositional choices. The resemblance to a Western landscape tradition was seen by many as a denial of a self-consciously Aboriginal intentionality. In recent years it has become accepted practice to describe Namatjira's paintings in terms of particular dreaming sites[121] and a means of accessing particular knowledge. In his work the two cultures intersect rather than converge – familiar in many ways but there is also covertly asserting its difference.

Australia has also been a country coming to terms with modernity, and traditional painting engaged many themes of modern life. Questions emerged about the most appropriate form for Australian art, particularly during the interwar decades. With the onset of the Depression, publishing became risky and the market for art contracted. While the market slowly regained strength, it would be another 30 years before it attracted the kind of speculative investment necessary to provide the optimism required for a regular art publishing industry. Ian Burn argues that during the interwar years, the pastoral landscape tradition secured the dominant expression

[121] Burn, Ian & Stephens, Anne *'Albert Namatjira: The white mask'* Butler, Rex (Ed) *Radical Revisionism: An Anthology of Writings on Australian Art* (IMA 2005)

of difference. Whilst landscape painting in Australia has sources in European landscape traditions "much has been re-specified in the local tradition and on that basis difference has been perceived"[122]. During these decades "within a range of subject matter, but especially in landscape, there was a new found confidence and certitude and the popularity of the landscape imagery was forged through its participation in building the national self-image. A dominant theme for artists became the representation of the idea of the place – the visual discovery of Australia, and the consolidating of the visioning of Australia – which declared a new regional identity, a sense of belonging, of attachment to place, a different place."[123]

Artists, such as Sam Atyeo, Grace Cossington Smith, Margaret Preston, William Frater and Arnold Shore challenged the prevailing dominance of the pastoral landscape. They were trying to reconsider Australia's place in the world. The 1999 touring exhibition of works by Clarice Beckett[124], forgotten for three decades after her death in 1935, presented her as a great and highly individual painter in Australia's landscape tradition. The exhibition showed, for the first time the range of her work, highlighting her unusual choice of subject matter and fascination with atmospheric conditions. The significance of her work lies, at least partly, in her portrayal of the contemporary suburbs, particularly surrounding where she lived. Her work, like the work of many female artists[125] between the wars, also raises questions about modernism in Australia, and the mechanisms by which artists are either acknowledged and established or ignored. The more recent '***Modern Australian Women: paintings & prints 1925-1945***' (2001) and ***'Misty Moderns'*** (2008)[126] exhibitions also made similar arguments on behalf the artists represented. Many were aware of the need to increase the level of intellectual and cultural exchange with Europe, and to challenge Australian isolationism, without relinquishing traditional views of

---

[122] Page 203 Burn, Ian *National Life & Landscapes: Australian Painting 1900-1940* (Bay Books, 1990

[123] Burn, Ian, *National Life & Landscapes: Australian Painting 1900-1940* ( 1990) p. 16

[124] The exhibition is the result of decades of work by Clarice Beckett's biographer, Rosalind Hollinrake and was organised by The Ian Potter Museum of Art (Melbourne); exhibition dates: 24th March to 14th June 1999 S.H.Ervin Gallery; 19th June to 18th June 1999 Orange Regional Gallery; 6th August to to 19th September 1999 Art Gallery of South Australia; 30th September to 31st October 1999 Bendigo Art Gallery; 5th November 1999 to 16th January 2000 Ballarat Fine Art Gallery; 3rd February to 26th March 2000 Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery; 7th April to 22nd May 2000 Burnie Regional Art Gallery

[125] For example, Dorrit Black, Margaret Preston, and Grace Cossington-Smith

[126] ***'Misty Moderns'*** was an exhibition put together by the Gallery of South Australia, and toured through a number of galleries in Victoria and to the National Gallery of Australia in 2008/2009

belonging and attachment to place. Russell Drysdale stepped onto this cultural stage with his representations of harsh isolated outback life, rapidly catching the popular imagination.

Many Australian artists faced the dilemmas produced by the changing attitudes to the direction of painting - the colonialist mythology was heightened as much as challenged by modernism's celebration of technology's triumphs over nature - the responses could be in terms of any single style. In reality therefore there was a significant diversity of approaches. The contradictions which shaped the vision of the landscape in 20th century Australia were between domestic and public space, the pastoral and the desert, belonging and dispossession, private property and national symbolism, even 'civilised' and 'uncivilised'. The experience of the First World War and the subsequent new perception of national status more provided those oppositions with more precise definition, and produced a more strident call for cultural distinctiveness to be recognised internationally.

The first four decades of the 20th century had seen many profound changes and upheavals in Australia – the process of national unification had climaxed in Federation in 1901, but it remained a nation with little cohesive concept of itself as a nation. A little more than a decade after Federation Australia was drawn World War 1, and then a world-wide depression a decade later. Recovery from this saw a struggle against fascism as a prelude to World War Two. The impetus to industrialise in these decades had a gradual impact within the culture, especially in communication, transportation and electrification of the home. However successive waves of modernism swept through daily life dramatically altering the lifestyles of most Australians. As a result a society emerged with very mixed attitudes towards modern living, tolerant of many apparent contradictions between the 'modern' and the 'traditional'.

The art produced during these decades underwent radical changes. In this environment of often conflicting pressures, the nature of art accommodated 'contradictory' attitudes, giving rise to the synthesis of modern and traditional forms which characterise much Australiana art of the time. Some of the strongest evidence of this appears in landscape painting which, at a time when modernist approaches were being explored in many countries, retained a peculiar vitality within Australian culture. "Pictures of landscape became and have remained the most valued within a

hierarchy of subject matter and provide the strongest threads of continuity in any history of Australian art. Consequently shifts in the conceptions of the landscape are especially significant to an understanding of Australian art and its history."[127]

With the advent of war and the threat of invasion it became clear to young artists that previous cannons in art, as in life, had been irrevocably changed. The arrival in Australia of refugee artists from Europe provided vial links with international trends like Social Realism, Surrealism and Expressionism and helped to invigorate and modernise the work of Nolan, Boyd and Tucker – artists who were preoccupied re-mythologising the landscape.

During the 1940s a new expressionism emerged in the search for a way to depict the Australian landscape – an attempt to engage with the landscape emotionally and visually. Sydney Nolan challenged the prevailing psyche of the established visual art tradition in imagining the landscape, introducing "the human drama into the hitherto unpopulated but defining image of the Australian landscape...It was not that natural landscape but the human landscape that drove and sustained his curiosity and imagination,"[128] The early 1940s saw many of Nolan's landscapes painted in Wimmera portrayed one of the impacts of modernisation locating the 'worker-hero' in a familiar setting as the modern face of rural industry[129]. Nolan seems to have accepted that modern life has intervened in the experience and image of the landscape – some of the institutions of rural life were adapted to modern technologies, such as railway tracks, signals and crossings, bitumen roads, telegraph poles and aeroplanes. The isolation of those living and working in small communities is dramatised by their dependence on these services.

During the latter part of the 1940s he went on to paint other place-based stories, such as that of the heroic Mrs Fraser, creating his first major series as a mature painter between 1945 and 1947 – the Ned Kelly series. His interest in the Kelly story took him to 'Kelly country' in northern Victoria, "yet in this series of paintings he distils some of the sense of space and light he had

---

[127] Burn, Ian *National Life & Landscapes: Australian Painting 1900-1940* (Bay Books, 1990) Page 7
[128] Capon, Edmond *'Introduction', Sidney Nolan: 1917-1992* (Art Gallery of NSW), 2007
[129] Burn, Ian, *'Sidney Nolan: Landscape and modern life',* Butler, Rex (Ed) *Radical Revisionism: An Anthology of Writings on Australian Art* (IMA Brisbane 2005)

experienced in other parts of Australia".[130] There is also an interest in subject matter relating to working class life in contemporary Australia – factories and industrial landscapes, public baths and beaches, picnics in public gardens, Luna Park with its popular entertainments.

Russell Drysdale's vision of the gaunt, arid landscape depicted in heroic and theatrical terms in reds, amber and gold replace the romantic images of the Heidelberg School. Hill End was one area that provided inspiration for artists such as Donald Friend, Russell Drysdale, Jean Bellette, Margaret Olley and Jeffrey Smart. A rich legacy of paintings, diaries, drawings and photographs from 1947 onwards reveals the relationship that developed between these artists, the people of Hill End and the local landscape. Central to the Art Gallery of New South Wales' exhibition[131] in 1995 was the recognition of the achievement and influence of the first generation of Hill End artists from the late 1940s. The desolation surrounding Sofala and Hill End provided Drysdale and Friend with the scene for a radical reappraisal of traditional landscape perceptions. "The shock of recognition we experience in the austere power of Drysdale's work is now an essential part of the Australian experience. The scarred red earth, the scattered houses, the silent ruins, the leaden skies and the resilient locals were cultural realities these artists developed to break the spell of the Heidelberg Golden Summers forever. By the time of his death in 1981, Russell Drysdale's influence had been such that it is almost impossible to look at the Australian landscape and its inhabitants without reference to some of his imagery, which reflected the stark, harsh reality of the Australian bush. Many of his images have helped to form a national identity and have become icons of Australian culture. Hill End became a cultural crucible in which many aspects of our national life were revealed and consolidated."[132]

In 1949 Nolan first saw the Central Australian desert from an aeroplane, and soon travelled through it on the ground. Seeing the continent from these perspectives changed the way Nolan understood himself as an Australian and an artist. [133] Nolan's trips to the desert prompted a series

---

[130] Engledow, Sarah *'Through blue eyes'*, *Portrait 30* (National Portrait Gallery of Australia) Summer 2008

[131] 18th July to 17th September 1995 Art Gallery of New South Wales - *The Artists of Hill End* (then touring to Bathurst, Armidale, Broken Hill and Ballarat

[132] Gavin Wilson, Gavin, *'The Artists of Hill End: Art, Life and Landscape'*, *Look Magazine* (Art Gallery of NSW) July 1995. By the mid-1950w a new generation was lured to Hill End, including Brett Whiteley, Michael Johnson, John Olsen and John Firth-Smith. From 1994 a third generation of artists re-established historic links to the area and with the earlier artists.

[133] Engledow , Sarah, *Portrait 30* (NPGA) Summer 2008

of 'void-aerial' landscapes shown in the David Jones Gallery in 1950. He aimed to incorporate human presence and history within an incredibly harsh landscape, filled with chromatic changes. Alongside these he also made a number of desert scenes incorporating European figures, such as ***'Burke and Wills Expedition'*** (1948), returning to these figures in the mid-1980s.There is a suggestion of disjunction between the figures and the landscapes through which they travelled. Other artists, like Austrian born Judy Cassab, also engaged with Central Australia from 1958 onwards. In 2000 the Art Gallery of New South Wales mounted its ***Australian Icons*** exhibition, it had found that its Nolan collection was lacking. A period of acquisition ensued culminating in the unveiling a room dedicated to Nolan works in December 2004. The heart of the display is ***Central Australia***, part of the series that emerged from Nolan's 1949 expeditions – a work that had not been on the market since 1950. The gallery could now show a broader range of Nolan's work – more than the iconic Ned Kelly images.

In 2003 the National Gallery of Victoria (Ian Potter Centre) brought together works dating from 1949 to 1953 for their ***Sidney Nolan: Desert and Drought*** exhibition.[134] This body of work reflects themes close to the nation's heart – desert and drought, reiterating the vastness and other qualities of the Australian landscape. Much of the work had not previously been exhibited in public as the paintings had been snapped up quickly by private collectors within Australia and offshore. One of Nolan's most significant contributions to landscape painting was to portray the essential untidiness of the Australian landscape. Nolan's body of work has directly contributed to the way in which Australians see and sense the country that surrounds and shapes them[135]. It is also a "progenitor of influence'[136] – Nolan's desert paintings of the late 1940s, for example, triggered the writing of Patrick White's epic ***'Voss'***, and the Ned Kelly series sowed the seed for Peter Carey's ***'True History of the Ned Kelly Gang'***. "Each of these novels, in turn, further imbedded the relationship to country in the imagination of several generations of Australians."[137]

---

[134] 6th June to 17th August 2003

[135] In 1953 Nolan went to England, travelling extensively, frequently exhibiting in Europe and Australia during the 1950s. Two great series emerged – a repeat of the Kelly and Mrs Fraser themes but reflecting a closer link with contemporary British and European painting.

[136] Engledow , Sarah, *'Portrait 30* (NPGA) Summer 2008

[137] Engledow , Sarah, *Portrait 30* (NPGA) Summer 2008

In 1956 when Fred Williams returned to Australia from England, he was surprised to find a landscape that looked 'unstructured' – with no focus of interest. The perception directed him towards a new way of depicting Australia's "free, random, endlessly exfoliating space. William's singed trees don't mind looking scraggy...they seem to be suspended in the brown air, not fastened o the soil. Life surges through their gaunt trunks, and the very flecks of paint are seeds, disseminating energy across a country that has been renewed by its close brush with death."[138] Artists were finding a new way to look at and listen to the country. Australian space does not so much open into a 'promised land' – our deserts instead place something of a 'cautionary limit on aspirations'.

After the Second World War Australian artists responded to international trends – Pop Art, Abstract Expressionism, Minimalism, Conceptual Art and Post-Modernism. Abstract artists, for example, inspired by the landscape, have combined Asian with European influences to portray a distinctively contemporary sense of place. In the wake of the war there waves of immigrants and ideas hit Australian shores heavily transforming Australia's culture and self perception.

Landscape painting had survived the formlessness of abstract expressionism in the 1950s. By the mid-1960s it looked like landscape painting had been almost eclipsed in North America and Europe. However in Australia it remained a significant subject for painting. The obsession with nature as subject matter had persisted, as had the strong tradition of depicting the landscape. Indeed it could be argued that the history of Australian art is very much one of responding to the diverse range of landscapes. Landscape painting defined our culture.

A new and more intimate vision of the Australian scene has become increasingly evident in landscape painting. In 1960 the painter, gallery director and member of the Commonwealth Art Advisory Board, Robert Campbell, argued that "the bird's eye view, successfully exploited by Arthur Streeton, Tom Roberts and their followers, the burnt back-ranges, far distant plains, winding streams and scattered townships have over the years become hackneyed by derivative

[138] Conrad, Peter *Tales of Two Hemispheres*, (Boyer Lectures 2004) ABC Books, Sydney 2004) Page 31

painters of little talent, anxious only to produce saleable views."[139]. A new approach was needed to allow a subsequent generation of painters to make their contribution to the portrayal of the Australian landscape. Some reacted against the conventionally beautiful in nature by depicting erosion, drought, the 'red and ragged heart' of the continent, but there was a risk in this becoming a monotonous tradition. Other artists have moved towards a 'worm's eye view' of the landscape, observing the landscape from the lowest possible vantage point. This concept of a vision for the Australian landscape seems to have informed the acquisition of paintings for the National Collection between 1959 and 1962. This is evident in the early acquisition of paintings by Albert Tucker, Arthur Boyd, John Perceval, and James Cant – artists now recognised for their radical contributions to Australian art in the 1940s, but initially represented in the National Collection by what may described as conservative landscapes. Works by these artists, as well as those by Clifton Pugh and Ray Crooke, are primarily personal responses to the Australian landscape. There is also a commonality in the close-up or 'worm's eye' view that perhaps confirms Robert Campbell identification of the 'new vision' of Australian landscape. With the expansion and evolution of the National Gallery's collection over the last 40 years, the more conservative landscapes by these artists have languished. They do however provide insights into the formation of the National Gallery's collection and the ongoing significance of the landscape in the history of Australian art.

The 1960s generation of artists was re-evaluating the way in which Australian painters engaged with the immediate environment – the landscape, the myths the stories associated with it. There seemed to be some sort of national identity, expressing a commitment to local culture whilst remaining open to influences from abroad and to modernist traditions. Artists, including Charles Blackman, Arthur Boyd, Ray Crooke, Frank Hodgkinson, Robert Juniper, John Olsen, Clifton Pugh, Tim Storrier, Brett Whitely and John Wolseley, continued to look at the landscape over the next few decades. John Olsen, through his own work, has created one of the few original visions of the Australian landscape since the late 19th century, providing some of the visual vocabulary for portraying the Australian landscape. All put forward in his 2004t exhibition[140] at his son's gallery were expected to sell, priced between $80,000 and $200,000. Olsen has also been an

[139] Campbell , Robert (1960) as cited by Tonkin, Stephen, *'Radical Artists, Conservative Landscapes' Artonview* (NGA) Issue 29 Autumn 2002

[140] 19th October to 6th November 2004, Tim Olsen's Galleries, Paddington

influential teacher of younger artists like Colin Lanceley, John Firth-Smith and Ann Thompson. Whiteley returned to the countryside throughout his life, producing works of great power and beauty, at times heavily influenced by Lloyd Rees' vision of landscape, While Rees' style was more analytical and considered, it shares with Whiteley's work, the same erotic sweep and sensual feel for the land[141].

Celebrating the 10th anniversary of Arthur Boyd's retrospective exhibition at the Art Gallery of New South Wales, Savill Galleries in Sydney presented a collection of important paintings in ***"Arthur Boyd Revisited'*** in August 2003. The exhibition included more than 40 works ranging from the rare 1930s coastal works to paintings from the ***London***, ***Lovers***, ***Wimmera***, ***Nebuchadnezzar*** and ***Shoalhaven*** series. In 1950, 'golden summer landscapes' were Arthur Boyd's first paintings to enter public collections. Whilst Boyd's art was unusually varied in medium and content, his style was unusually rapid and spontaneous. In some of Boyd's works in ***'Open Air: Portraits in the landscape'*** there seems to be a sense in which the landscape has been internalised by the artist, even when they may have been painted far away from the places they evoke and whilst he was producing very different works, such as the anguished depictions of the conditions of Indigenous people and the harrowing ***Bride*** series during the 1950s, and the ***Nebuchadnezzar*** series in the late 1960s.

To foreign observers, Boyd's art seems to be akin to Surrealism, with parallels to Chagall and Picasso. In Australia he is usually linked to Melbourne Modern Expressionism. His many exhibitions had generally been straightforward shows of new work for sale, and analytical museum shows were rare. The Art Gallery of New South Wales' 1993 retrospective, the first in thirty years, was particularly significant in terms of exploring the duality in Boyd's work – an engagement with a 'darker side'. The breadth and richness of the works brought together for ***River + Rocks***[142] in 2001 "manifests the complex passions Arthur Boyd and Brett Whiteley bring to their experience of the Australian landscape."[143]

---

[141] Exhibition details: 10th February to 3rd July 2002 *Affinities: Lloyd Rees & Brett Whiteley*, The Whiteley Studio
[142] 20th October 2001 to 27th January 2002, Brett Whiteley Studio
[143] *'Rivers + Rocks – Boyd and Whiteley: A River of Inspiration', Look Magazine* (Art Gallery of New South Wales) November 2001

Boyd went on to produce scores of landscapes after he returned to Australia to live in the Shoalhaven area[144]. Boyd had discovered a new landscape that would preoccupy him for the remainder of his life, and the epic landscapes he painted there explored the relationship of mankind to the landscape. in 1993. Boyd was convinced that 'no one could really own a landscape'. 'You can' he said 'only keep something by giving it away'.[145] Boyd died in April 1999 after a long, prodigious and versatile career – as a painter, sculptor, engraver and potter. His range of subjects had been immense, but he expressed his relationship to landscape when he was quoted as saying that "If I was whisked away...I think I could put up with anything except not seeing the Australian landscape. I mean, all have to die sometime... if I were to die and go up to what a painter friend calls that big studio upstairs...I hope I could still see the Australian landscape ....and I hope I could still keep painting it too" (Arthur Boyd, May 1998) .[146]

Lloyd Rees, renowned for his draughtsmanship, had been greatly admired throughout his long career, with his popularity peaking during the 1980s - last decade of his life, when he produced works of almost transcendental power – light as a symbol or metaphor for life. "An engaging conversationalist, he was also a succinct and penetrating thinker and writer, especially of his times and about issues of public concern, like the environment, his contemporaries and of his own work.[147]" Throughout the 1940s and into the 1950s, Rees applied himself mainly to painting, rather than drawing and printmaking. The Centenary exhibition[148] of his works held at the Art Gallery of New South Wales in 1995 included a number of highlights – he exploited the materiality and symbolism of rocks as have few other Australian artists, for example, on top of Mount Wellington near Hobart, in central Australia, or the south coast of New South Wales.

Over this period, as indigenous issues acquired greater prominence in the broader community, there was also an increasing interest and understanding of Aboriginal art. The works by

---

[144] In 1973 Boyd bought a property on the Shoalhaven River on the south coast of New South Wales. In 1975 Boyd had given the National Gallery some 3,800 works in all media, and later the Shoalhaven properties and a large collection of artworks by all members of the Boyd family, letters and photographs to the nation, providing the basis of the Bundanon Trust in 1993.

[145] Goldrick, Margaret, *'Ramsholt Revisited - The Painter and Poet: Arthur Boyd and Peter Porter'*, *Eureka Street,* July/August 1999

[146] Hawley, Janet, *'Elusive genius of the gentle pixie'*, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 26 April 1999

[147] Kolenberg, Hendrik, *'Lloyd Rees Drawings – Centenary Exhibition', Look Magazine (Art Gallery of New South Wales)* March 1995

[148] Exhibition dates: 2nd March to 14th May 1995 (Art Gallery of New South Wales)

indigenous artists included in ***'Open Air: Portraits in the landscape'*** (National Portrait Gallery of Australia), painting about the land "is fundamentally concerned with perpetuating understanding of ancestry. In some of the works by non-Indigenous artists in the exhibition, the landscape is occupied by a more recent type of ancestor figure".[149] There is a significant difference between Indigenous understandings of ancestral beings who created the law, the land and the order of the world, and non-Indigenous applications of the term to denote a forebear. From the Aboriginal viewpoint, the entire country was and is a spiritual landscape. All art is a means of coming into contact with the 'life of the dreaming' and expressed the dynamic relationship between the individual and the environment.

Rover Thomas was one of several Warmun artists to adopt a distinctive view of the landscape. Whilst identifying shared iconographic elements such as the planar view, there are distinctions between the treatment of landscape by Warmun painters and Western Desert artists. The emphasis in Warmun art is on the depiction of environmental features created by the ancestors, rather than on the narration of ancestral events.

The artist John Coburn, who considers himself fundamentally as a landscape painter, has asserted that the greatest Australian artists are Aboriginal artists – they paint the sacredness of the land. Coburn's own work, especially his late work, has been described as "like hearing the voice of the vast, ancient continent. The early work is awash with the joy of the landscape; the late, with a recognition of its spiritual, emotional charge."[150]

Cathy Robinson, Richard Baker and Lynette Liddle describe[151] two contrasting journeys through a central Australian landscape - that taken by senior Anangu women and their families as part of their responsibilities to care for their country, and the other, the pilgrimage taken by large numbers of tourists to the same landscape in Ulutu-Kata Tjuta National Park – to climb the rock that has been promoted internationally as an Australian outback icon. The case study highlights the complexities of managing landscapes with contested meanings.

---

[149] Engledow, Sarah '*Through blue eyes' Portrait 30*, Summer 2008) National Portrait Gallery of Australia
[150] Bennie, Angela *John Coburn: Sacred sights in three colours', The Sydney Morning Herald*, 22nd to 23rd November 2003
[151] '*Journey through an Australian Sacred Landscape', Museums International* (Quarterly) Vol.55, Issue 2 September 2003

In 1988 four major touring exhibitions focused on life on the Australian continent – past, present and future. ***'Terra Australis[152]'*** presents a European view of Australia from the notions of the 15th century to discovery; ***'First Impression[153]s'*** from the British Museum, presents the first settlers' impressions of Australia's flora and fauna; ***'The Great Australian Art Exhibition'*** presents the great sweep of Australian art from 1788 onwards; and the **'Australian Biennale[154]'** presents the work of major figures in modern art with the work of Australian artists seen for the first time in an international historical context.

***'The Great Australian Art Exhibition'***[155], one of the major touring events of the Bicentennial Programme, was the largest and most comprehensive surveys of Australian art to date, and encompassed a vast range of imagery of Australia's landscape, its people and its natural history from colonial times onwards. Its European content begins with Captain John Hunter's set of watercolour drawings of natural history subjects (1788-1790) and ends with Imants Tillers' ***'Kangaroo blank'***, painted in 1988. The inclusion of Aboriginal works, including traditional artefacts, provided the opportunity for visitors to respond to the power and beauty of the objects. The scope of media in this exhibition provided a sense of the inter-relationships between art forms, enabling visitors to look at Australia's art heritage and reassess the Australian experience of re-creation and redefinition in many different ways that since 1788 – a process that will continue into the future. The exhibition has three themes – Nature, the People and the Individual. 'Nature' included both Aboriginal and European works, some of which looked at the way in which the Australian landscape was depicted to fit long-established traditional styles, whereas others tried to define typically Australian aspects of the landscape.

In 1998 the inaugural exhibition at the University of South Australia Art Museum – ***'Expanse: Aboriginalities, Spatialities and the Politics of Ecstasy'***[156] - was an attempt by the curator, Ian North, to question both the significance of the landscape in a postcolonial culture, and the

[152] Exhibition dates: 27th July to 2nd October 1988 Art Gallery of New South Wales
[153] Exhibition dates: 22nd September to 20th November 1988 Australian Museum, Sydney; touring to Melbourne, Brisbane, Adelaide, Perth and Hobart
[154] Exhibition dates: 18th May to 3rd July 1988 Art Gallery of New South Wales
[155] Organised by the Art Gallery of South Australia & touring to every state capital; exhibition dates: 21st October to 27th November 1988 Art Gallery of New South Wales
[156] Exhibition dates: 4th September to 3rd October 1998

complex relationship between indigenous and non-indigenous ways of seeing. It brought together new work by five well known contemporary artists – Rosemary Gascoigne, Antony Hamilton, Kathleen Petyarre, Imants Tillers and Jon Cattapan – united by their profound to question and varied approach to landscape. The curator's selection of artists was personal - the exhibition made no attempt to be a comprehensive survey. It was an ambitious attempt to traverse "difficult but fertile terrain, demonstrating clearly the complexities and profound implications of a dialogue between indigenous and non-indigenous artists, implications which point far beyond the realm of art."[157]

Many Aboriginal artists describe quite specifically if not literally, the particular terrain in which they live. "There is a certain irony in the fact that non-indigenous artists came to link the landscape genre with imperialism and therefore move away from it, Aboriginal artists were being embraced by the art establishment and adopting western media to produce their own representation of the land based on ancient traditions."[158] Kathleen Petyarre's terrains are informed by the artist's 'Dreaming', the Ankerrth (Mountain Devil Lizard or Thorny Devil). Petyarre shared with the artists a sense of being within, rather than alienated from, their localities – whether urban, rural or outback – while remaining open to global and metaphysical connections.

Imants Tillers, the son of Latvian migrants to Australia, in his multi-panelled work, ***Monaro***, 1998[159], recognises the importance of place, not only in terms of personal identity, but more particularly in terms of cultural identity and modes of representation, leading him to explore iconic images of the Australian landscape in terms of cultural stereotypes.

In 1992, a major survey exhibition entitled ***'Two Hundred Years of Australian Painting'*** was shown at the National Museum of Western Art, Tokyo and the National Museum of Modern Art, Kyoto. This was the first historically-based exhibition of Australian art ever sent to Japan. Some of the most significant 'icons' produced in Australia were included. The final selection focused on themes of nature, landscape and people as expressed through Australian art. The Japanese

[157] Thomas, Sarah *'Expanse: Different Ways of Seeing Landscape', Art & Australia* Vol. 36, No 4, Winter 1999
[158] Thomas, Sarah *'Expanse: Different Ways of Seeing Landscape', Art & Australia* Vol.36, No. 4, Winter 1999
[159] The fifth and final work in his *Diaspora series*

interest in international Impressionist painting and, more recently, contemporary Australian Aboriginal art, is apparent in the overall selection of works. Works were drawn from all major Australian galleries, as well as regional galleries, dealers and private collectors, and there seems to have been a desire to promote Australia in Japan in a way significantly differing from the commercial approach and the contemporary art activities which had previously taken place. The exhibition is divided into four themes: ***'Nature and People of the New World'*** looking at colonial Australia; ***'Australian Impressionism'***; ***'Modernism in Australia'***, focusing on the period between 1900 and 1940; and ***'New Images of Society, Art and Nature'*** juxtaposing European and Aboriginal responses to the Australian landscape during the 20th century.

***'...such fertile ground...'***[160] was a project celebrating regional Victoria's achievements in the hundred years since Federation. Each of the twelve towns/regions involved created large scale images based on culturally significant stories and icons. These images were aerially photographed and presented in a postcard extending the image and the work, and promoting the region. Australia as a nation is often represented using images of the outback and country. This however belies the diverse communities living in the bush or towns and outside the capital cities. Twelve regional towns took up the challenge to turn their land, literally the soil and landscape surrounding their communities, into a unique piece of contemporary art.

The natural world remains a source and a background even for those artists like Mike Parr and Imants Tillers, whose work appears at first glance to be remote from it. The landscape – or more particularly 'the land' – continues to be a significant subject. There has been a recognition of the complex ways in which the natural world is seen and represented, and a realisation, at least partly stimulated by an understanding if Indigenous art, that 'the certainties of earlier generations of Australian landscape artists were strongly ideological'[161]. Ecological concerns have perhaps been the strongest driving force in the continued investigation of landscape in Australia. There have been many artists, like John Wolseley, for whom Australia's environment has been a central theme. In his work Wolseley has explored the relationship of people to the landscape whilst

---

[160] The project was funded by The Centenary of Federation (Victoria), The Regional Arts Fund (A project of the Commonwealth Government Community Support Fund), Regional Arts Victoria, Arts Victoria, The Australia Council, The Myer Foundation, Skyworks Aerial Photography

[161] Sayers, Andrew *Australian Art (*Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2001), 2001, p 217

documenting his own journeys in Australian wilderness areas. Rosalie Gascoigne, like Wolseley, searched through her constructions for the fragile and fleeting in the Australian bush. In Western Australia, Howard Taylor produced sublime abstract works in the 1980s after a lifetime of engagement with the light and landscape of his home state.

William Robinson (b. 1936) already established as a figurative artist of enduring quality through exhibitions throughout the 1970s and 1980s, emerged in the 1990s with a series "of mature landscape paintings which explored, with great sensitivity to nuance and light, the complex experience of the Australian bush"[162]. Art historian Andrew Sayers here identified an element of the nineteenth –century 'sublime' and abundance in Robinson's work. Whilst his reputation grew as a contemporary landscape artist, Robinson described himself as a 'painter of his own backyard'. He has stamped the landscape genre with his own idiosyncratic vision, and has shown himself to be innovative within the Australian tradition. In 1995, the Art Gallery of New South Wales acquires ***'Man and the Spheres'*** from Robinson's Creation series of 1991. In March 2003 a huge work by William Robinson, titled ***The Bright Sea, Springbrook***, sold at auction through Deutscher-Menzies in Sydney for $200,000. Although this was significantly less than the estimated sale price, the Melbourne collector who sold it had bought the painting two years ago in Brisbane for about half the bid.[163] In 2003 The National Gallery of Australia bought Robinson's much anticipated five-metre canvas ***Creation Landscape: Fountains of the Earth*** with the assistance of a new fund.

Today there is something almost mystical about the idea of wilderness. When the term is invoked, the community knows "environmentalists are speaking of a sacred tract of land – a word that is worth a thousand photos".[164] Around its standard campaign after campaign has been fought to protect sites that have now become iconic. It is easy to see why conservationists are so attached to wilderness and why they are concerned by requests to stop using it from Aboriginal leaders who claim that it perpetuates the myth of terra nullus excluding them from managing traditional lands. Some influential scientists also say that the term has distracted the public from

---

[162] Sayers, Andrew, *Australian Art (*Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2001), Pp 200-201

[163] Masien, Geoffrey, *'Auction windfall brings art crown back to Sydney', The Sydney Morning Herald*, 6 March 2003

[164] James Woodford, *'Hunters and protectors', The Sydney Morning Herald* (Weekend Edition), 6th to 7th December 2003

the real environmental concerns. When most people look out over wilderness, they only see the magnificence of the Australian bush. Now they are being asked to become more conscious of what we are really seeing.

***'Wildness'***, a three-part program televised in August/September 2003, brought together over 300 photographs and archival footage to document the lives of two of Australia's greatest wilderness photographers – Olegas Truchanas, whose interest in the natural beauty of his adopted home became a lifelong passion, and his younger friend and protégé Peter Dombrovskis - whose work became synonymous with campaigns from the 1950s to the 1980s to protect Tasmania's most precious natural resources. The parallels in their lives are striking. They left behind a legacy of extraordinary images, contributing not only to photography but to an emerging environmental consciousness in Australia. Peter Dombrovskis' most famous photograph, ***Rock Island Bend***, was the iconic image of the campaign to stop Tasmania's Hydro-Electric Commission damming the Franklin River, appearing in the ***Sydney Morning Herald*** as a full-page advertisement just prior to the 1983 Federal election. Such images proved vital to environmental campaigns because most of us have not been to the disputed sites or seen the species at risk. They show what is at stake, and, like as 'art' invoke a response to the image. Dombrovskis was the finest landscape photographer in Tasmania. Other photographers typically were 'bushwalker photographers' short on skill and experience, whose images therefore lacked impact in subsequent campaigns.

Richard Woldendorp has been photographing the Australian landscape from the air for more than forty years, capturing its natural idiosyncrasies and man's prints upon it. There is a painterly abstraction to his work. Woldendorp's latest images, unseen in Sydney until his exhibition at the Boutwell Draper Gallery in August 2004, show that he has moved to an even deeper appreciation of the Australian landscape. In the large, finely printed images Woldendorp shows a deepening love for the landscape. Woldendorp was born in the Netherlands in 1927, and arrived in Australia in 1951. He has fashioned "a truly Australian vision, finding a sonority with the aerial aesthetic that dominates Aboriginal landscape painting."[165] Woldendorp's imagery is informed by a deep knowledge of Australian painting. Echoes of the work of Fred Williams and John

[165] McFarlane, Robert, '*From the sublime to the everyday' The Sydney Morning Herald*, 27th July 2004

Olsen pervade many images, but it is evident that Woldendorp draws inspiration from same source as these painters – the land.

Rick Amor believes that the immediacy of nature gives colour and shapes you can't make up yourself, and claims that photographs tend to be rather flat and 'a bit dull' unlike nature itself. To celebrate the ten years that Amor and a small group of fellow artists have been painting *'en plein air'* together each Friday, they are holding an exhibition called ***'500 Fridays'*** touring Victoria during 2003 and 2004.[166]

There is more to the story of Australia art than merely the engagement of artists with the natural world. Artists have long sought to portray the real Australian landscape, but some, like artist Howard Arkley, would later argue that, while the countryside has been romanticised, the suburban vista, most familiar and most relevant to the bulk of the population, has been largely ignored.

It has been argued that Jeffrey Smart depicts a world of urban alienation and despair, and there is certainly a sense of melancholy in his paintings. Smart seems to be fascinated by the 'precarious beauty' of the commonplace elements in the urban environment – in road signs, underpasses, parking lots, highways and goods yards. The presence of a figure in the landscape provides a sense of scale and some sort of focal point.

In ***'The Well Built Australian'***[167] installation in 1999, Michael Goldberg uses text and objects relating to the city's development. His material is not limited to contemporary event, but also looks at the correlation between the entrepreneurial developments now and in Governor Macquarie's time.

It's been said that Sydney could have been the most beautiful city in the world, but instead of being planned, it just happened. Dr Peter Emmett, curator of the ***'Sydney Suburb'*** exhibition at

[166] Benalla Art Gallery to 29th June 2003; Monash Gallery of Art (Melbourne) 11th July to 31st August 2003; Latrobe Regional Gallery 10th September to 22nd October 2003; Castlemaine Art Gallery and Historical Museum 10th January to 29th February 2004; March/April 2004 Bundoora Homestead Centre for the Arts.
[167] Exhibition dates: 3rd July to 8th August 1999 Art Gallery of New South Wales

the Museum of Sydney in mid-2000, believes that it is this diversity which makes the city so human. This exhibition was part of a trilogy of exhibitions focussing on Sydney – ***Metropolitan***, ***Suburb*** and ***Harbour***. A mural of twelve panels painted by Ken Searle is a feature of the exhibition, showing his interest in place – in geography, topography and generally the way people live in their suburbs. This is the first time the panels have been seen together for ten years.

Whilst portraiture was served by the Archibald Prize, the Wynne Prize, awarded annually also by the Art Gallery of New South Wales since 1897, has given vital support to landscape painting in Australia. The prizes at least until the 1940s, had the effect of encouraging large, dramatic images of generally Arcadian pastures.

Although not the oldest landscape prize in Australia[168] the Wynne prize is the longest running art prize in Australia. Many of Australia's most highly regarded artists have won the prize including George Lambert, W.C.Piguenit, Hans Heysen, Elioth Gruner, Arthur Streeton, Sydney Long, Sali Herman, Russell Drysdale, William Dobell, Lloyd Rees, Fred Williams, John Olsen and Brett Whiteley. The National Gallery of Victoria's touring exhibition[169] of Fred Williams' ***Pilbara Series*** in 2004-2005 has been designed to provide regional audiences with the opportunity to see these outstanding landscape paintings - the last major series painted by Williams prior to his death in 1982. These exemplify his distinctive vision of the landscape, especially that of the inland, which is widely acknowledged as having shaped the way Australians see their own country

A survey of paintings associated with the Wynne Prize reveals that the Trustees, public and critics alike felt that landscapes 'worthy of the prize' should be in a 'spirit and style' derived from Arthur Streeton's work portraying Australia as a pastoral arcady. Of the works included in

---

[168] The existence of a 'Scenery Competition' is recorded in the Trustees (AGNSW) Minutes of 1891). Richard Wynne died on 15 June 1895, making provision for an annual art prize first awarded in 1897 to Walt Withers' ***The Storm***. The prize was to be awarded to the best landscape painting of Australian scenery in oils or watercolours, or the best figure sculpture by an Australian artist and judged by the Trustees of the AGNSW. In its 1st century the prize was awarded to sculpture only 8 times, resulting in its association in the public mind with landscape. Not all winning works were acquired by the Art Gallery of NSW)

[169] Touring to Geralton Regional Art Gallery, Araluen Galleries, Mildura Arts Centre, Hamilton Art Gallery, Albury Regional Art Gallery

the Centenary[170] exhibition, Heysen's ***Summer*** (1909) and Gruner's ***Morning Light*** reinforced these archetypes. This pastoral convention was not challenges until the early 1940s, when the prize was awarded to more modernist works, depicting city life, such as Douglas Watson's ***Backyards*** (1942), Sali Herman's ***McElhone Stairs*** (1944) and Russell Drysdale's ***Sofala*** (1947). Subsequent winning works reflected the greater diversity of styles which developed in the middle decades of the 20th century. The Wynne Prize has probably been more reflective of the major developments in Australian art rather than actively influencing art practice. Winning the Wynne Prize or even being exhibited, furthered the reputations of artists, and attracted critical comment.

The existence of a prize focussed on landscape, has fostered ongoing interest in Australia's strongest art tradition, and in a way exposes the public to evolving approaches in contemporary art practice. The inaugural ***Country Energy Art Prize for Landscape Painting*** was awarded to Ian Betterson, a Bathurst-based artist, in July 2003. This is the newest and richest acquisitive art prize in New South Wales. Country Energy has undertaken to sponsor the prize for a minimum of five years. It was the brainchild of Joe Eisenberg, the director of the New England Regional Art Museum, who identified the need for increased opportunities for regional artists. Just to be included in the exhibition bestows status, and could provide further opportunities and encouragement. More than 350 entries were submitted - mostly large works but styles, media and subjects varied considerably. The 2003 exhibition was in Armidale, but subsequent exhibitions were expected to move to regional galleries around NSW, giving artists greater exposure.

Contemporary artists revisit the subject with new, diverse interpretations, proving the hold that the Australian landscape continues to have over the imagination of this country. The bush may well have provided the foundation for a nation that defined itself in terms of 'soil and toil' and when we think of the Australian inland, we think of the explorers the original inhabitants, and past history. The idea of ourselves as contemporary urbanites is still based on, or a reaction to, attitudes to the 'myth of landscape' and attitudes to the inland, particularly the desert, held by the 19th century explorers and settlers. However people always run to the coast. Australia has always

[170] 21st March to 11th May 1997 Art Gallery of New South Wales - ***The Wynne Prize Centenary***: an exhibition of selected winners of the Prize, coinciding with the annual Archibald, Wynne, Sulman and Dobell Prize exhibitions

been surrounded by sea, and the sea was the place where most Europeans looked for relief. From the earliest days of white settlement, we have faces seawards. Our maritime sense of heritage is tinged with ambivalence. The sea "may have softened the edges of what, to its invaders, was a parched and isolated country, but beyond the inshore waters it was a vast and mysterious presence, seductive yet dangerous."[171] There is a sense both of longing and fear. There is a sense in which we think of the past in terms of romantic, nostalgic and idealised views of the outback, and the present in terms of the instability of the postmodern city and the coast

Australia's geographic isolation and relatively recent European settlement have determined the development of our culture and identity - as both the most ancient home of the oldest living indigenous population and the newest continent on earth, untouched by 'civilisation' prior to European settlement and subsequent developments. This duality exists in the perception and handling of the landscape by both Indigenous and non-Indigenous artists who focus on landscape. Landscape as a genre continues to provide significant impetus for the work of artists in Australia, and the ways in which we present ourselves overseas. However, in the contemporary environment, the interpretation and presentation of landscape has diversified, engaging with contemporary environmental and urban issues as well as indigenous interests.

[171] Gaunt, Ruth, *'O Seas of Imagination', Bulletin (with Newsweek),* 16 December 2003

# WHAT DOES 'AUSTRALIAN' LOOK LIKE? A FASCINATION WITH FACES

Humans have a remarkable ability to distinguish thousands of faces, more comfortably identifying those with whom they share a similar ancestry. We continue to be fascinated by faces as so much depends on our ability to recognise those who are important to us or who may pose a threat, and to interpret the myriad of emotions that faces reveal. These interpretations may depend on universally recognised signals – some however are very much culturally-based, and therefore at risk of misinterpretation. While technology changes, the human face is constant, mediated by fashion, politics and technological change."[172] Portraiture is therefore an art form with which we readily engage. But what does an Australian look like? How have our faces changed over time and what sort of images will best reflect Australia's future?

What makes a portrait? A portrait is not just about a person, but a point of time. A portrait is more that a literal or superficial visual depiction of a face, even though some degree of likeness is an essential characteristic. Portraitists don't merely describe what they see - they also play an interpretive and narrative role - articulating a very human and personal story - revealing other things about the person, often denoting status, power, wealth and social context, and delving beyond the surface, perhaps reflecting facets of the sitter's personality and what the artist thinks of their subject. A good portrait also provides some insight into personality and psychology – the spirit of the person - taking account of the conventions of public and private portraiture, and those around the male and female portrayal. Some portraits deliberately challenge these conventions. A portrait tells us more than who these people are – it tells us what they are - becoming, not only a work of art, but a socio-historical document. There are many examples of portraits that represent great people with significant achievements or that are connected with political and cultural events in times and locations that will trigger some kind of collective memory. There are others, however, that simply portray an idea, a moment, an event or an unnamed person. These can be very powerful and can generate critical and public discussion as can be seen in the response to one of the winners of the most recent ***Head On Photographic***

[172] Desmond, Michael *'Technological terminology' Portrait 36,* Winter 2010, National Portrait Gallery of Australia

***Prize***[173]. This image, entitled ***Noah*** by Gill Meydan[174], portrayed a father holding his dead newborn child. Some of the judges some were very uncomfortable with its choice as a winner, because of the powerful expression of pride and pain which is revealed in such a private time of grief and loss. The public display of such images and the accompanying discussion challenges traditional perceptions of what is acceptable in the public domain and what is actually going on in the community.

The artist John Brack argued that portraiture was the only mode that involved three people – the painter, the sitter and the viewer.[175] A portrait was about identity. The whole picture was the portrait, not just the face or the figure. There is an increasing interest in the interaction between these participants and the significance of this relationship in producing portraits which really 'work' rather than merely good likenesses. However "fleeting the connection between artist and sitter, it's part of the alchemy that determines artistic merit."[176].

A portrait comes out of an encounter between the sitter and the artist, and a great deal can be revealed about that relationship. A good portraitist is never impartial. "The great portraitist either glorifies or debunks, he ennobles or satirises, he accepts a man's assumptions concerning his own importance, and writes – or rather paints – him up, or else he penetrates those assumptions, and paints them down...A good portraitist. In short, will bring out the hero a man would like to be or the villain he is"[177]. The prospect of being immortalised on canvas may be appealing, but history is littered with disgruntled sitters who have had a particular view of what they look like and who, for one reason or another, have objected to the way in which they have been portrayed.

---

[173] The *Head on Portrait Prize* was founded by Moshe Rosenzveig in 2004 as an independent national photographic portrait competition. The main selection criteria relate to the quality and impact of the image rather than the celebrity of the photographer or the subject. The inaugural *Head On Photo Festival* took place in Sydney from April 29 to June 5, 2010.

[174] Gil Meydan takes such photos as part of a service for grieving parents of Melbourne Hospital where he works. He reportedly considers it a privilege, but also very challenging and difficult, to take such pictures.

[175] Brack, John as cited by Grishin, John, *Portraits by John Brack*, National Portrait Gallery, Canberra, 2007, Page 3. Brack was interested, not only in exploring the dialogue between artist, sitter and viewer, but also in establishing a relationship with art historical traditions of portraiture.

[176] Arndt, Bettina, '*Archibald poser', The Sydney Morning Herald,* 9 March 2004

[177] Smith, Bernard, '*Australian Portraiture', The Critic as Advocate: Selected Essays 1948-1988,* Oxford University Press, Australia 1989

Another important factor in the development of any portrait is the reason for that particular portrayal – whether or not it is a commission i.e. who is paying for it? This has lead to 'disgruntled sitters' who have been unhappy with the results. Is the portrait primarily for submission to one of the portrait prizes, and what will happen to it after the competition is finished. Some artists are well known for their portraiture and for their style of portraiture, whilst others are less well known, or will undertake commissioned portraits to bring in income to allow them to continue with their other work.

Exhibitions like, ***Truth and Likeness***[178] investigate the importance of likeness in portraiture. The notion of what a portrait is will continue to develop, coming to terms with the modern world. Photography has, for example, brought significant challenges to the genre itself as well as public perceptions. Balancing the desire to record the likenesses of particular people, chosen by whatever criteria, and the artistic merit of the works selected has been a contentious area for collecting and exhibiting institutions and those backing the multitude of portrait prizes.

History, like contemporary Australia, is complex and multilayered and there is little, if any, room for black and white judgements – it is important to have forums in which diverse perspectives, interpretations and parallel histories can be proposed. Portrait galleries demonstrate that history is about people, doing more than celebrating achievement. Portraiture is important to both collective and individual memory, perpetuating and extending, and "a nation without memory is a nation without soul"[179]. A national portrait gallery may, in some ways, create composite pictures of national identity.

Whilst there are no national galleries for still-life or landscape, a portrait gallery will always be relevant, no matter what county it's in, because everyone has a face and a history and the desire to make some impact on the world. There is a 'feel good' factor to a gallery devoted solely to portraits which can do many things – they can honour the famous dead, celebrate success and achievement, extend awareness or understanding of the subjects they depict. National portrait

[178] *'Truth and Likeness'*, National Portrait Gallery, Old Parliament House, 26 November to 8 April 2007, contrasts portraits by eight painters – Josonia Palaitis, Jiawei Shen, Jude Rae, Cherry Hood, Ben Quilty, Mike Parr, John R. Walker and Patrick Pound -who are working with varying degrees of realism. Sculptures by Sam Jinks and Adrienne Doig and photographs by Petrina Hicks, Darren Siwes, Warwick Ckarke and Sue Ford are also included.
[179] Rudd, Kevin, *'An Australian story', Portrait 31*, National Portrait Gallery of Australia, Autumn 2009

collections fulfil an important role in creating composite representations of national identity and should necessarily be 'works in progress'. Louise Doyle, the recently appointed Director of Australia's National Portrait Gallery, is keen to interact with expanding audiences in a range of strategies, asserting that the Gallery is involved in a 'conversation with people' not only with their current membership base.

The notion of identity is challenged by the post-modern world, and the qualifications for becoming a 'notable' citizen shifts and expands. Common to each portrait galleries is the panorama of history on display and the representation of men and women whose deeds and activities have contributed to the fabric of their community and nation. They are likely to encounter ideological challenges to their ability to display a comprehensive meta-narrative of a nation's history through portraiture. They are, nonetheless, about people, their triumphs, disappointments, achievements, good and bad years. Lilly Koltun, for example, claims that Canada's national identity is not definable because it is not a place we have arrived at: rather, it is a journey we are still making."[180]

Wherever the British settled, wherever they colonised, one of the societal elements they brought with them was portrait painting. Portraiture has traditionally been concerned with documentation and recording likenesses for posterity Portraiture has a long history in Australia, and it seems there is an almost insatiable appetite for portraits, perhaps reflecting a desire to know who we are. The establishment of portrait galleries in the 19th century promoted the idea that images of great men, and it was usually men, had a beneficial impact on society...to encourage 'the work ethic and to raise public morals' ... to lead by example.

The art critic, John McDonald, argues that there 'is a mania for portraiture' in this country that shows no sign of abating. Amongst Australian artists there are many who mastered the representation of the figure, perhaps unexpectedly so for many viewers who associate Australiana art more readily with landscape. Portraiture had been a prolific and significant artistic preoccupation prior the gold rushes of the 1850s. Through the romantic haze of the

[180] Kiltun, Lilly, *'Canadian Identities: National identities in the Canadian context', Portrait 14*, National Portrait Gallery, Canberra, Summer 2005

nationalism of the late 1880s and 1890s, as Australians became the greatest urban dwellers in the world, scenes of rural labourers and sunny landscapes came to be regarded as 'typically Australian' and a self-conscious mythology of the bush developed in both painting and literature.[181] It was during this period that the National Galleries of Victoria, NSW, South Australia and Queensland and a handful of significant regional galleries were established. The collecting policies and displays in Australian art galleries have reflected this – many landscapes were acquired and exhibited, whilst other subjects, including portraits were collected by libraries. Portraits were viewed as pre-photographic records of the country's pioneers and, as such, of historical rather than aesthetic interest. The interpretation of portraits – both painted and photographic – has changed, as has the way that artists approach their work.

It seems that that images of the Australian figure rather than the face itself dominated visual culture in the first half of the 20th century with a recognisable 'face of Australia' only emerging in the 1960s – a frank, weather-beaten, blue-eyed male gazing into the sun – as some kind of metaphor for the nation. Australia is still predominantly Anglo-Saxon – a point made clear in the ***Facing Australia*** photographic project[182] which is an ambitious project that aims to produce a series of composite faces based on current Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) data relating to the age and ethnic profile of the population. As time passes increasing numbers of Australians have mixed origins. At a basic level improved health care and nutrition has also had an impact. Projects like this provide a snapshot in time and the face of a place is always changing. The ***Facing Australia*** project can be seen as a key visual social document contributing to the national archive to inform future generations about who we were in the early part of the 21st century. My interest here is how these shifts have been, or could be, reflected in the portrayal of the Australian identity in the public arena.

In the 20th century, with the shifting emphasis in portraiture towards providing an insight into the multiple aspects of an individual personality rather than just their deeds or professional achievements, national portrait galleries are increasingly seeking to change their image. They had tended to forsake quality works if the sitter was deemed inconsequential for duller works by

[181] Radford, Ron *'Australian Colonial Portrait Exhibition', Art & Australia,* Volume 18, No 1 Spring 1980

[182] The catalyst for the investigation of identity was the Tampa and 'children overboard' affairs, and the questions raised about who is an Australian and who should be permitted to be here..

lesser artists if the sitter had achieved renown or typified some attitude or activity in the nation's development. There has now been some degree of reassessment of what constitutes 'national portraits' and a redefinition of national significance.

Still, not everyone gets excited about the idea of portraiture. For some it conjures up images of a musty, dull and extraordinarily tedious genre. Portrait galleries, reflecting their times and established "in an era of purse-lipped 19th-century morality"[183] tended to be filled with sombre oil paintings of 'the great, the good and the dead'. At the other end of the spectrum are the enhanced, often artificially, 'famous' faces that flood popular culture, often on the basis of fairly dubious merit – or even being famous for being famous. Increasingly, celebrity photographic portraits, which are usually commercial commissions, are shifting from the glossy magazines into art museums, becoming part of a national collection – images of the famous are among the biggest crowd pullers. It's hard not to reflect on the cult of celebrity that seems to saturate our culture – but these particular people are famous, and famous for a reason, and they coexist beside many less familiar faces – medicos, scientists, architects, business people and activists. Portrait galleries today must satisfy the aesthetic, as well as the historical demands of viewers, balancing the voices of the powerful and the previously powerless.

The National Portrait Gallery in Canberra is one of few portrait galleries in the world – the National Portrait Gallery in London opened in 1854, the National Portrait Gallery in Washington, opened in 1968, the Scottish National Portrait Gallery in Edinburgh, established in the 1880s, and a New Zealand Portrait Gallery, which opened in February 1992. There are also national portrait collections in Denmark and Sweden, Ireland, and Canada, to be launched in Ottawa in 2007. With the exception of London and Scotland, all the other portrait galleries are housed either in castles (Grippsholm in Sweden and Frederiksborg in Denmark), within larger collections (Dublin) or in adapted public buildings (Washington, Ottawa and, more recently Wellington[184] in New Zealand). Whilst the histories and institutional frameworks vary widely, they are linked by two common ideas – the belief that portraits illuminate history and that a

[183] Morgan, Joyce, *'Portrait of our times' The Sydney Morning Herald*, 4-5 October 2008

[184] New Zealand's National Portrait Gallery started in 1990 in the National Archives, later moving to a gallery that has formerly been used as a temporary parliamentary debating chamber. They do not own its own display space but in Wellington they usually use *Shed 11* for exhibitions. It was built in 1904 as waterside store and provides a display area of beauty for all New Zealanders.

continuous display of portraits, both historical and contemporary, helps us to understand the way in which individuals have shaped and continue to shape our national identities. The National Portrait Gallery in Washington was, for example, established as "...a free public museum for the exhibition and study of portraiture and statuary depicting men and women who have made significant contributions to the history, development, and culture of the people of the United States, and the artists who created such portraiture and statuary."[185] It plays a conspicuous role in the construction of American icons. It is a space in which the 'true version' of American history and what it means to be a 'notable American' are contested, defining who Americans should look up to and why.

Portrait galleries often collected works more for their particular documentary or historical value to the nation than for their aesthetic value[186]. Works were acquired on the basis of the sitter's status, rather than the quality or aesthetic character of a particular image to be considered as a work of art. "Their holdings review the passing parade of characters – men, women, and the occasional animal – who have made a contribution to the fact or fiction of national life."[187] The National Portrait Gallery in London was established on the basis that it was to be concerned with history rather than art - about the status of the sitter rather than the aesthetic value of the image. This criterion is still used when considering potential acquisitions, but current public attitudes and interests challenge such reasoning. Initially, no portrait of any person still living, apart from the reigning monarch and his or her consort, or any person deceased for less than ten years should be acquired by the National Gallery in London. This rule changed in 1969 to encourage the inclusion of prominent contemporary sitters.

The concept of a national portrait gallery in Australia has a discouraging history, arguably dating back to the 1830s. From as far back as 1911, the Federal Parliament's Historic Memorials Committee had commissioned and collected portraits of Australia for an eventual national portrait collection. A Commonwealth Art Advisory Board was established and survived until 1972, when responsibility for the arts was handed over the Arts Council. By the 1990s many of

[185] *Senate Bill 1057*, creating the National Portrait Gallery, 1962

[186] Until 1969 the Gallery had regulated against the acquisition of portraits of anyone still living (or dead less than ten years) except for the reigning Sovereign or his or her consort.

[187] Faigan, Julian, '*Uncommon Australians: Towards an Australian Portrait Gallery*', *Look Magazine*, Art Gallery of New South Wales, October 1992

Australia's best and historically most important portraits were already held, and continue to be held, in various public collections. In 1994 the Commonwealth Government announced that the National Portrait Gallery would be developed, firmly linked to the National Library of Australia It was recognised that, while aesthetic and artistic considerations would be important, it would have a responsibility to present exhibitions which would offer 'an historical interpretation of Australian life and achievement'.[188] Initially it had been envisaged that this National Portrait Gallery, under the wing of the National Library of Australia, would concentrate on the presentation of three or four exhibitions per year drawn from existing portrait collections and in private collections[189], given that many of what were considered Australia's best and historically most important portraits were already held in public collections. This incarnation collapsed

In Australia, we have had the chance to create a gallery that would reflect Australian society both as it was, and as it has evolved[190] - the story of who we are, where we have come from and the people, events, ideas and the forces that have shaped what might be called an Australian identity. The permanent collection only began in May 1998 and the gallery has been avidly collecting since then. Each year the gallery commissions portraits to represent Australians for whom a suitable portrait does not exist, and providing an opportunity to bring together leading contemporary artists with significant individuals as sitters, as exemplified by the Gallery's iconic 1999 portrait commission of musician Nick Cave painted by Howard Arkley.

Peter McGaurin, Minister for the Arts in 1999, asserted that the Australian National Portrait Gallery (ANPG) provides "a key link between political history and our broader history. Andrew Sayers, Director of the National Portrait Gallery, says that visitors began to appreciate when the gallery first opened, the focus on the exploration of national identity – as more than a 'hall of fame' full of 'famous, important, significant' people. The gallery aims to present "an evolving view of Australian society and culture told through portraiture and research on the collection continues in order to effectively communicate its stories and to identify suitable portraits for acquisition".[191]

---

[188] Thompson, John, '*Creating a National Portrait Gallery*', *Look Magazine*, AGNSW, April 1994
[189] Thompson, John, *Look Magazine*, AGNSW, April 1994
[190] Thompson, John, *Look Magazine*, AGNSW, April 1994
[191] Chapman, Christopher, *'In the galleries'* , *Portrait 30* Summer 2008

The National Portrait Gallery opened on 4th March 1999 with a firm vision of a portrait gallery intending to be a major player nationally and internationally, challenging the profile of other art institutions, like the National Gallery of Australia, for leadership in the interpretation of the arts in Australia. Consideration still needs to be given to the fact that Australia's cultural heritage collections, whether in Commonwealth ownership or in state or regional institutions, form a collective whole that is a resource for Australians. In this context, the National Portrait Gallery cannot operate effectively in isolation. The gallery had, for its inaugural exhibition for example, borrowed important portraits from public and private collections, to supplement the Gallery's small but growing collection of portraits of Indigenous Australians from the early decades of European settlement. The Portrait Gallery's physical proximity to the National Gallery of Australia and the National Library close to Lake Burley Griffin in Canberra may also be indicative of these relationships.

A number of supporters in the early days of the Gallery's collecting, donated funds to allow the Gallery to commission or to buy portraits, and continue to support new proposals and new acquisitions. In this way the collection has been able to develop a quality and depth unusual for Australian museums representing the "history of a nation shaped by hard work and innovation, by courage and vision, people wanting to make a difference whether it be by way of a cricket bat, a lab coat or a helping hand for someone in need."[192] One of the main arguments for a dedicated building was that it would allow for the display of over 400 portraits reflecting a much fuller and more meaningful story than was possible in the limited exhibition space previously available in Old Parliament House. The collection is a blend of historical and contemporary portraits of those who have made an impact on Australia – of significant Australians, by birth, adoption or association, who have made an impact or are otherwise representative of Australian history. Consideration is given, in drawing works into the collection, regardless of the medium, to both the significance of the subject or sitter and the artist. The focus is therefore more on the side of history rather than art, and, as a result, some of the portraits displayed in the gallery will be chosen because of the person they represent rather than their artistic merit. All portrait galleries accept this as a pre-condition. Each portrait is not just about a person, but a period in time, and is

[192] McGauren, Peter (Minister for Arts) '*The National Portrait Gallery', Sunday* 28 March 1999

a socio-historical document. The relationships between artists and sitter, art and history inevitably engage the viewer. There are important gaps and an extensive 'wish-list' of portraits to be acquired. Assistant Director of the National Portrait Gallery, Simon Elliott has noted that visitors also engage with the sense of Australian achievement, identity and culture.[193]

Whilst Australia's National Portrait Gallery had been operating out of Old Parliament House since 1999, and the temporary annexe in Commonwealth Place, a purpose-built gallery has more recently been opened. The Gallery's director, Andrew Sayers has been considering how best to develop and display a collection that can tell the national story through its achievers. Aboriginal elders appeared in the opening exhibition in 1999, ***'The Possibilities of Portraiture'***, predominantly depicted by non-indigenous artists. These included Benjamin Law's busts of Truganini and Woureddy, a print of Bungaree by Augustus Earle and a late 1890s Talma photograph of Barak drawing a corroboree. However, Robert Campbell Junior's portrait of Charles Perkins and ten dramatic portrait heads made by John Dodo and other artists in the 1980s in the Kimberley were also on display. There may be room for further policy development to ensure the ongoing representation of the 'excluded' and 'dispossessed'. Since this time the inclusion of portraits of 'ordinary' Australians has also been on the agenda, evident in exhibitions like John Elliott's photographs of rural and regional Australians in ***'Thousand Mile Stare'***[194], and the ***Head On*** in 2007[195].

The National Portrait Gallery has, since its opening in 1999, received consistently positive press attention and healthy visitor numbers. The National Portrait Gallery of Australia, when it opened in its new home in December 2008[196] on the shores of Lake Burley Griffin in Canberra, held a collection of around 1250 works – mostly in storage. The brief for the new gallery asked for a building that takes its scale 'from the human body, the measure of portraits', allowing both the

---

[193] Sutton, Pollyanna '*The Evolution of Portraiture: Australia's National Portrait Gallery, The Space Visual Arts: Australia's National Portrait Gallery*', 27 June 2003

[194] Exhibition on display from November 2004 to March 2005

[195] With the demise of the *Citigroup Portrait Prize* at the AGNSW in 2006, there was no longer a national photographic portrait prize. It was revived at the National Portrait Gallery in 2007. *Head On* as a photographic competition, stepped into the vacuum in the meantime. The eclectic display shows how elastic the definition of photographic portraiture has become.

[196] The NPG had lobbied the Howard Government for a 2004 campaign promise of $56.5 million for purpose-built premises for the gallery to show a larger portion of the collection.

collection and exhibitions to demonstrate the potential of portraiture beyond mere likeness. The gallery space is filled with diffused natural light. The expanded generously proportioned display areas that have become available allow for up to 450 works to be on display, facilitating the routine rotation of works in the larger building. As visitors enter the new gallery space, they will initially be exposed to a number of the more recently commissioned works, and contemporary works will introduce and conclude the suite of other rooms which will be set out is a more systematic chronological order on the basis that the shaping of Australia is an ongoing process rather than a completed one.

The Gallery presents the great sweep of Australian history which is complex and multilayered...there is no one story to be told. The images provided by Indigenous Australians tell us of their place on this continent – their relationship to their surroundings, their spiritual beliefs, their dispossession, their past experiences and struggles. The Tituni posts at the start of the permanent collection commemorating the dead from the Tiwi Islands, are not only decorated poles but are also Indigenous representations of people and their being – they too are portraits. The Percy Leason exhibition of Aboriginal portraits[197], for example, had particular social implications, engaging with contemporary issues. The diversity of Australia's portrait traditions and cultural make-up will be clearly shown – daguerreotypes, sculptures, 'carte-de-visite' and death masks from the 19th century, grand paintings, photographs through to the new media of the mid-to-late 20th century and the most recent developments. This diversity is important – some of the most vivid portrayals are not in the form of traditional oil paintings.

The inaugural exhibition in the new building presented over 400 unique, inspiring and recognisable portraits reflecting the "lived experiences of people –daughters and sons, mothers and fathers, families and friends, teams and gangs, individuals and loners. They represent faces of Australia: of Indigenous heritage, of struggles for nationhood, of attempts to define masculine and feminine character. They include stories or arrivals and departures, of social cohesion and social upheavals."[198]

---

[197] '*Recognition: Percy Leason's Portraits of Victorian Aboriginal People*', 11 November 1999 to 13 February 2000, which also toured to Gippsland Art Gallery in Sale (26 February to 26 March 2000

[198] Chapman, Christopher, *'In the galleries', Portrait 30,* Summer 2008 (National Portrait Gallery of Australia)

In ***'Open Air: Portraits in the landscape'*** , a defining exhibition for the new National Portrait Gallery in Canberra, the exhibition extended the notion of portraiture beyond the simple definition of 'pictures with faces to "embrace deeply-rooted visual expressions of identity in which various artists have engaged with different kinds of ancestral history."[199] In the many works by indigenous artists included, painting about the land "is fundamentally concerned with perpetuating understanding of ancestry. In some of the works by non-Indigenous artists in the exhibition, the landscape is occupied by a more recent type of ancestor figure".[200] Whilst there are significant differences between Indigenous understandings of ancestral beings who created the law, the land and the order of the world, and non-Indigenous applications of the term to denote 'a forebear', all Australians seem to have a sense of connection to place and landscape as part of our national identity. Sarah Engledow identifies threads in the work of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous artists that use stories of either family members or historical figures whose influence persist through generations. "These impulses to explore and inscribe national origins are often enacted in places that mean a lot to the non-Indigenous artist..."[201] as exemplified in some of the work of Arthur Boyd.

Boyd's great contemporary, Sidney Nolan created his first major series as a mature painter – the Ned Kelly series – between 1945 and 1947. These 'meditations' developed around a 'story arising in the bush and ending in the bush'. Andrew Sayers observed[202] that Nolan sensed that there was a way in which landscape is defined by the stories that happen within it, and which 'persist in the memory'. The Ned Kelly story was only the first instance of Nolan's interest in the conjunction of Australian stories about individuals, specific landscapes and the mythology thet developed around that conjunction. During the latter part of the 1940s he went on to paint other place-based stories, such as that of the heroic Mrs Fraser. His exploration of the Burke and Wills story, for example, suggested a disjunction between the figures of the explorers and the landscapes through which they moved.

---

[199] Scanlon, Joni *'Art's New Look: The new National Portrait Gallery building provides the perfect platform to see art that reflects the Australian culture', See Canberra: Share the city you live in,* Summer 2008

[200] Engledow, Sarah *'Through blue eyes' Portrait 30*, Summer 2008, National Portrait Gallery of Australia

[201] Engledow, Sarah *'Through blue eyes' Portrait 30*, Summer 2008, National Portrait Gallery of Australia

[202] In the catalogue that accompanied the 1994 exhibition of Kelly works at the Metropolitan Museum in New York as cited by Engledow, Sarah in *'Through blue eyes' Portrait 30*, Summer 2008, National Portrait Gallery of Australia

Andrew Sayers, as Gallery Director, has focused on remoulding expectations, through the strategic acquisition of commissions and purchases and bold temporary exhibitions, transforming the "portrait-painting genre into a living project that has the enormous tapestry of Australian culture, in myriad forms, at its core"[203], stimulating an interest is in what each image reveals about the subject. It is significant that the National Portrait Gallery's brief, unlike that of most public galleries in Australia, included the ability to commission works by contemporary artists, which tested curatorial acumen because of the need to match the most appropriate artist with a particular sitter. The National Portrait Gallery commissions portraits, generally four per year – the first batch were cricketer Mark Taylor (by Bill Leak), singer Nick Cave (by Howard Arkley), runner Cathy Freeman (by Kerrie Lester) and immunologist Gus Nossal (by Peter Churcher). Other subjects include the likes of Steve Irwin, Deborah Mailman Graeme Murphy, Elizabeth Jolley, Betty Cuthbert, Johnny O'Keefe, Nick Cave and Percy Grainger. Moving amongst them prompts the viewer to reflect on the 'cult of celebrity' evident in our culture. Whilst these people however are famous for good reason, they are joined by many less familiar faces – doctors, lawyers, scientists, architects, artists, business people and industrialists and activists – individuals with a tendency to be creative in their chosen field. These portraits are paintings, prints, photographs and sculptures. The Gallery has also acquired a number of significant self-portraits. John McDonald identifies, as a potential problem, the number of significant works borrowed from other institutions that have been included in the permanent display[204].

As an institution, the Portrait Gallery aims to connect the visitor experience with the contemporary world, through the development of a dialogue between the permanent display and temporary exhibitions. The plan is that the temporary exhibition program, taking up a quarter of the new space, will continue to present work that extends the limits of how people think about portraiture. Sayers' ambition is that the gallery will explore the artistic limits of portraiture as a genre.

National portrait galleries have been traditionally predicated on the idea that identity can be equated with individuality. In Australia, however, we have Indigenous traditions in which

---

[203] Sayers, Andrew *'Reflections on portraiture' Portrait 13,* National Portrait Gallery, Spring 2004
[204] McDonald, John, *'A step beyond the hall of fame' The Sydney Morning Herald,* December 13-14 2008

identity resides elsewhere – in relationships and people's relationships to land. There is a great deal of potential to explore these relationships in works by both Indigenous and non-Indigenous artists. "After thirty years of radical reappraisal of indigenous art" as Lauren Martin observes "the innovative National Portrait Gallery is, ironically, one of the last to embrace traditional indigenous paintings. These mark a critical challenge to convention: the traditions of Australia's indigenous people are almost anti-portraiture."[205]

The Gallery does in fact hold many portraits of Aboriginal people, such as the actors Deborah Mailman and David Gulpilil, and artists Emily Kngwarreye and Clifford Possum. Works by indigenous artists are also displayed, although Tracey Moffat and Gordon Bennett, for instance, do not identify primarily as indigenous artists. The collection, however, has not acquired any traditional Aboriginal works, however, such as cross-hatched depictions of place, icons and ancestors that many indigenous people would understand as 'more complete' portraits, because Aboriginal art is centrally concerned with the identity of people in the context of their own system of cultural values - the challenge revolves around aspects other than the sort of individuality which has traditionally been the focus of Western portraiture. These values relate to the relationship between people and place, the individual's spiritual identity based on their ancestral inheritance.

Andrew Sayers has deliberately encouraged a level of debate about the nature of indigenous representation and where it fits into the Western notion of portraiture. Aboriginal art is essentially concerned with the identity of people, though it emphasises aspects other than direct likeness. Indigenous portraiture will inevitably relate to appropriate cultural norms which tend to play down individuality and emphasise relationships, family, clan and belonging to place.- "the relationship between people and place, the spiritual identity of the individual that comes out of their ancestral inheritance."[206] Portrait of actual human beings are rare, but for the Yolngu for example, the characteristics of ancestral beings are richly represented in paintings, dance, song and sculpture. Indigenous protocols require that the names and images of the deceased are repressed during mourning and this is an issue the National Portrait Gallery has already faced

[205] Martin, Lauren *'What do you mean, that doesn't look like him?' The Sydney Morning Herald*, 6 July 2005
[206] Howard Morphy (Director of the Centre for Cross Cultural Research at the Australian National University) as cited by Marten, Lauren *'What do you mean, that doesn't look like him? , The Sydney Morning Herald*, 6 July 2005

with the removal of the dancer Russell Page's portraits when he died. Indigenous portraits, to some extent as other portraits do, necessarily place the sitter in context – the land, the geographic features, the animals, the activities associated with hunting or fishing would make up a portrait. Indigenous portraits will inevitably enter the National Portrait collection.

The Australian public loves portraits – we love to look at faces as seen through the eyes or artists. The two opening shows in the new premises were ***Open Air: Portraits and Landscapes'***, an exhibition of portraits of Australians in environments of significance to them, and ***'My Favourite Australian'***, in collaboration with the ABC. ***Open Air*** looked at the way the landscape and portraiture are integrated in the work of artists such as Arthur Boyd and Sidney Nolan. The gallery's focus was on the way in which portraits tell us, through images, text and biographical information, that life and identity are shaped en route – rather than through formal history or exclusively through the efforts of 'famous' people. In 2000 the Gallery purchased one of photographer Mervyn Bishop's[207] most powerful photographs, showing Gough Whitlam pouring a handful of soil into the palm of Vincint Lingiari[208] at their historic meeting at Wattie's Creek in 1975. In this photograph we see more than a portrait of two great leaders. It represents a turning point in the nation's history - the beginning of an acceptance of past wrongs and an initial step towards reconciliation.

***Proof – Portraits From The Movement 1978-2003***[209], a temporary exhibition in the National Portrait Gallery in 2003, included striking black and white images of ceremonies, meetings and land rights marches, featuring many of the key figures central to the cultural and political

---

[207] Mervyn Bishop is renowned as Australia's first professional Aboriginal photographer, beginning as a cadet photographer with Sydney Morning Herald in 1963. During the 1970s he travelled the country documenting Aboriginal communities and social histories on behalf of the Department of Aboriginal Affairs. Since 1986 he has worked as a freelance photographer and lecturer.

[208] The respected cultural leader and traditional land owner. The Wave Hill Cattle Station walk-off at Wattle's Creek, which led to the moment captured in the photograph, began as a wage strike on August 22nd, 1966. It developed into a battle of wills between the Gurundji people who had occupied the land for hundreds of generations, and the British pastoral company that had employed them as stockmen throughout the 19th century. Lingiari continued to lead his people as they demanded ownership of their traditional lands, autonomy and equality under the law. In 1988, 2 years after freehold title to Dagarugu was finally granted to the Gurundji people, Lingiari passed away, a leader and hero.

[209] This is an exhibition of more than 70 photographic portraits by the internationally acclaimed Juno Gemes. It is a unique collection that chronicles the cultural and political struggles of two generations of Indigenous Australians and the=r continuing testimony to gain autonomy. The exhibition was also shown at the Macquarie University Art Gallery in 2004.

struggles of this 30 year period – activists like Marcia Langton and Gary Foley; Mum Shirl and other community leaders; artists Wandjuk Marika and Thancoupie; and writers, dancers, filmmakers and photographers – presenting a vision of tenacity, hope and belief rather than despair and negativity. Gemes claimed that the "exhibition is immensely relevant not only in terms of Aboriginal history but in terms of who we are as Australians. It's about recognition, respect and responsibility. It's about the importance and value of cultural difference. It's about living together and learning from each other, and it's about justice for Aboriginal people."[210]

Whilst the role of portraiture has always been controversial, portrait exhibitions regularly attract the largest audiences, and the most contestants and submissions. Andrew Sayers asserts that the prizes do not "necessarily create the preconditions for empathy, which is what creates great portraits. In a way these prize exhibitions are a kind of salon for aspiring portrait artists."[211]

Unfortunately many artists, even those who regularly enter, are openly cynical about prizes. They tend to be sceptical about the arbitrary judging processes, the hype that sometimes becomes bigger than the event itself, the disappointment of failure, and the impact of the critics and the public exposure. Contemporary artists are critical of the conservative choices made by the high profile portrait prizes, whilst traditionalists claim that the lucrative contemporary art prizes reward only the trendiest work rather than those works of the highest lasting aesthetic value..

Michael Reid raises the question of the place of art prizes[212] in the marketplace. If nothing else they help to showcase art to a wider audience, which in turn means a greater potential market. Such awards also help to provide a vehicle through which to compare and contrast an artist's work with the work of his or her peers. An art prize provides opportunities for unrepresented artists to present their work to the viewing public, and also to see the work of artists not normally shown in galleries near them, if at all. The winning of an award can also provide an artist with a

---

[210] Gemes as cited in '*Proof – Portraits From the Movement 1978-2003*' – an acclaimed exhibition by internationally acclaimed artists Juno Gemes (http://.pr.mq.edu.au/events/index.asp?ItemID=1318)

[211] Andrew Sayers as cited by Gaston, Vivien, '*Faces in Dialogue: And Interview with Andrew Sayers' Art & Australia,* Vol.38 No.3 (March-May 2001)

[212] Reid, Michael, *How to Buy and Sell Art* (Allen & Unwin, Sydney 2004), p 26. Art prizes include the Doug Moran Portrait Prize, the National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Art Award, the Archibald prize, the Country Energy Prize for Landscape Prize, the Metro 5 Art Award, the Cromwell's Art Prize, the Portia Geach Memorial Award, the Geelong Contemporary Art Prize, the Redlands Westpac Art Prize and the Mosman Art Prize.

particular public profile, however short-lived, which can be of great value to an emerging artist's career.

Sebastian Smee argues that Australia's obsession with art prizes echoes our obsession with sport. "The need to pit sides against each other and see who emerges the victor, is an inveterate, some would say damaging, characteristic of public life in this country...And the tendency sits awkwardly beside our reluctance to make value judgements of a more discerning kind....Nuance, comparison, value, depth – all the more complex impulses sustaining art-love – tend to get crowded out by the superficial thrills of the competition." [213] Others argue that, whilst sports are regulated by governing bodies, there is not the same level of accountability in the determinations made for art awards, particularly the Archibald, which John McDonald describes as "the quintessential Aussie art exhibition. In theory, it is an egalitarian show that gives everybody a chance because most judges are not arts professionals and may have similar tastes to the mythical average citizen. In a country where every politician must pay lip service to equality and classlessness, the Archibald still allows us to believe that one person, one artist is as good as the next."[214] Ron Radford, Director of the National Gallery of Australia, acknowledges that the Archibald is too iconic to change, it has also become a circus[215]. Radford argues that art prizes do not have particularly positive outcomes for art, and his comments about the Archibald prompted a strong defence from Edmond Capon, Director of the Art Gallery of NSW.

Among the regular portrait prizes nothing rivals the Archibald Prize[216], even though the Doug Moran Prize has been worth significantly more money[217]. Some argue that if it weren't for the Archibald Australia's portrait traditions would be much weaker. The annual Portia Geach Memorial Award[218] was established in 1962 for the best portraits painted from life of a man or woman distinguished in the Art, Letters or the Sciences, or a self portrait, by any female artist

---

[213] Smee, Sebastian , *'Prize tag', The Sydney Morning Herald*, 20 March 1999
[214] McDonald, John *'The colours of democracy' The Sydney Morning Herald* (Weekend Edition) 7-8 March 2009
[215] Meacham, Steve, *'Art prizes just a lot of old Archibalds', The Sydney Morning Herald*, 8 September 2006
[216] The 1916 will of the prize's benefactor, J.F. Archibald, states that the prize is for the 'best portrait preferentially of some man or woman distinguished in art, letters, science or politics painted by any artist resident in Australasia' in the preceding 12 months.
[217] In 2009 the winner will receive $150,000. It is the richest portrait prize in the world.
[218] The annual Portia Geach Memorial Award was established in memory of Portia Geach (1873-1959), a painter, etcher and advocate for women's rights. The $18,000 award is presented to the best portrait of some man or woman distinguished in the Arts, Letters or Sciences by a female artist resident in Australia.

resident in Australia. It has been hosted by the S.H.Ervin Gallery in Sydney, and has been steadily growing in prestige, attracting a large number of entries in a variety of styles. The 2008 judging panel, Barry Pearce, Aida Tomescu and Jane Watters, commented for example that the 2008 field of 294 entries was the strongest in the award's 47 year history[219]. The award is currently worth $18.000.

Public enquiries to the Art Gallery of New South Wales are almost always about the enormously popular Archibald Prize, the longest surviving art prize in Australia, and one that comes closest to being a national event, despite its Sydney-centric reputation and the traditional rivalry between Sydney and Melbourne. Up until 1998 the breakdown of winners between Victoria and New South Wales has been thirty-one and thirty-three respectively. Some elements of the Victorian media have, in the past, claimed that Victoria's cultural pre-eminence was not fully appreciated by the Sydney judges deciding the national prize.

The Archibald Prize is in many ways unique, attracting a particular type of artist, and is the best known interface between the public and the art of portraiture in Australia, probably the most controversial and certainly the most popular competition, cultivating extraordinary interest in Australian portraiture. For many people this is the only time they will visit the Art Gallery of NSW or any other gallery. No other visual arts event has been subject to such constant critical and public attention, and the gallery is alert to the potential to attract and build audiences. The perpetual questioning of the Archibald's legitimacy in contemporary Australia, the role of the trustees in judging, the range and quality of the works selected, has fuelled debate around the prize and ensured its popular engagement. It has survived because it is about people, and generally those in the public eye, and it is necessarily topical because the portraits entered must be completed within the twelve months prior to the event.

With his death in 1919 J. F. Archibald set aside part of his estate for the endowment of an annual prize for the best portrait painted by an Australian artist[220], with the intention of celebrating culturally significant subjects, distinguished in their respective fields. All too often it has

[219] Schwartzkoff, Louise, *'Adversity brings success as self-portrait proves a winner' The Sydney Morning Herald*, 3 October 2008
[220] The first award was made in 1921.

however tended more towards the representation of the powerful and influential elites. This is seen by some as one of the problems with the Archibald. There is no doubt that a famous and well-liked public figure may increase an artist's chances of being hung. This celebrity factor – the requirement to select someone 'distinguished in arts, letters science or politics' - means artists often end up painting people they don't know in situations where they haven't had the time to establish a real connection. Year after year many painters have painted other painters. Over the last thirty years or so Edmond Capon, the Gallery of NSW's director, has seen a shift in popular subjects. In the early days of the award lawyers, soldiers, politicians and surgeons led the parade. In more recent years artist portraits, including self-portraits have been successful. Of the 40 finalists in 2008, 16 were paintings of artists. Capon observes that our new heroes are creative people – artists, actors and writers.[221]

Whilst the national consciousness of portraiture grew, public comment continued around the artistic quality, the role of the award, the public profile or lack thereof of the subjects, and the ongoing dominance of particular artists. "The Archibald fraternity would remain for many years a club of like-minded men in suits sharing a common view of the world – a man's world. Women might be painted, but not paint."[222] It was not until 1938 that the prize was awarded to a woman, Nora Heysen. Judy Cassab, one of Sydney's most successful portraitists, with her 1960 portrait of Stansilaus Rapotec, was the second woman to win the Archibald. Until 1998 only three more had joined their ranks – Janet Dawson in 1973, Davida Allen in 1986 and Wendy Sharpe in 1996. Judy Cassab had won a second award in 1967. Ross points out that"Either women artists are portrait shy or the CBD's glass ceiling somehow extended across the Domain."[223]

Archibald's intention may have been to perpetuate the memory of great Australians, to endow a national portrait gallery, to improve the quality of portrait painting, or to encourage young or unfulfilled artists. The wording of the will and the policy of non-acquisition of the prize-winning portraits left to the Gallery trustees decisions about how the prize should be judged and nurtured

[221] Schwartzkoff, Louise *'Portraits of painter pals as Archibald favourites' The Sydney Morning Herald* (Weekend Edition) 14-15 February 2009
[222] Ross, Peter, *Let's Face It: The History of the Archibald Prize - The Archibald Story*, Art Gallery of New South Wales,_ Sydney 1999, p.23
[223] Ross, Peter *Let's Face It: The History of the Archibald Prize - The Archibald Story,* 1999, p.54

as part of Australian culture. At the end of 1946 the trustees altered the conditions of the competition, introducing a selection process by which only those 'deemed worthy' would be exhibited rather than exhibiting all entries, and the criteria for 'worthiness' would ontine to lie with the 'establishment-minded' trustees..

Whatever his reasons for establishing the prize, Archibald left the final decision to people with very little knowledge of art. This has been a major reason for the prize's lack of consistency – for every good painting there are a number of tedious or fairly ordinary paintings. The recurring plea that the judging be done by 'experts' resurfaced, though it went against the democratic mandate that the judging be done by 'ordinary people' – if the trustees could be described as ordinary people. J.F. Archibald wanted a democratic portrait prize - in the main, the trustees are not experts or art insiders, bringing 'the eyes of Everyman' to the job. The Trustees tend to be captains of industry, bankers, lawyers, publishers and media consultants. Celebrity, fame and sentimentality affect everyone, making the selection of some works more likely than those that might be more valued on the basis of artistic merit. According to Herald's arts writer, Louise Schwartzkoff, there are two kinds of Archibald entries – those with more obscure subjects stacked facing the wall and the more famous faces displayed prominently facing out ready to catch the attention of the steady stream of journalists passing through. [224] The board has become more representative of the wider community through greater female representation, and the replacement of life appointments with maximum nine-year appointments. One or two practising artists are included and their influence might be seen in some of the more interesting winners of more recent years.

Even though few of the winning portraits have entered the NSW Gallery's collection[225], either by purchase or gift, many believe that the Archibald Prize has done more than any other single event to stimulate and sustain public interest in portraiture in Australia. Curator Barry Pearce assumed that the Trustees, as they acquired so few of the winning portraits, did not necessarily

---

[224] Schwartzkoff, Louise, *'Portraits of painter pals as Archibald favourites'*, *The Sydney Morning Herald* (Weekend Edition) 14-15 February 2009

[225] By 1996 just seventeen Archibald-winning paintings were in the AGNSW's collection –nine of these were actually purchased by the Trustees following the award. The rest were given by the artists themselves, or collectors, with the exception of John Longstaff's portrait of distinguished architect Sir John Sulman, himself an instigator of an annual prize administered by the Gallery. This was commissioned by the Trustees and was awarded the 1931 Archibald prize.

see the Archibald Prize as an opportunity to cement the principles of good portraiture through additions to the collection[226]. The most active period for acquiring Archibald winners was between 1952 and 1982, when ten came into the collection[227]. The irony is that during this period figurative painting was at a low ebb and abstraction was generally more dominant. It may be that a broader public awareness of modernism had penetrated the judgement process, "encouraging the idea that a good portrait could be a challenging conception as well as the demonstration of skill in capturing optical likeness." The Gallery's purchase of Judy Cassab's ***Stanislaus Rapotec*** (1960) and ***Margot Lewers*** (1967), Louis Kahan's ***Patrick White*** (1962), Brett Whiteley's ***Self-portrait in the studio*** (1976) and Kevin Connor's ***Robert Klippel*** (1977) signified an irrevocable shift in the definition of portraiture.

The Prize has always been subject to legal challenges, rivalries and animosities unimagined by Archibald himself. Throughout its long and chequered life it has thrived on controversy. The most notorious was the 1944 court case in which two Sydney artists challenged the Trustee's decision to award the 1943 Prize to William Dobell for his portrait of Joshua Smith, arguing that the work was a caricature and that the award was contrary to the terms of the trust. No award in the history of Australian art has caused such angst and injury. The action essentially hinged on the accepted definition of portraiture as a representation of the sitter. Whilst only three out of fifty visitors at the Gallery approved, the furore generated extraordinary public and editorial interest.[228]

The Archibald has never lacked entrants, public interest or critical attention. Whilst prizes like the Archibald, tend to be exercises in ratings and 'pitching to the crowds, aesthetic criteria are sometimes the last be applied to selections. For some years the talk has been of the dullness and mediocrity of the selection. The Archibald has never been an occasion for dazzling insights into contemporary art. The art critic Bruce James asserts that "Australians, among the first to embrace innovation in science and society, refuse to advance when it comes to visual art. We'd rather be beaten around the head with a stunned mullet...than accept that a portrait might actually

---

[226] Pearce, Barry *'Archibald Prize: 75 years of the judgement of Australian Portraits'*, ***Look Magazine***, Art Galler of New South Wales, April 1996

[227] Judy Cassab's ***Stanislaus Rapotec*** (1960) and ***Margot Lewers*** (1967), Louis Kahan's ***Patrick White*** (1962), Brett Whiteley's ***Self-portrait in the studio*** (1976) and Kevin Connor's ***Robert Klippel*** (1977)

[228] Ross, Peter *Let's Face It: The History of the Archibald Prize - The Archibald Story,* p.40

constitute something other than a brightly coloured, moderately three-dimensional representation of a face already grossly familiar to us."[229] Some argued that the Archibald was an anachronism in light of the major struggles of 20th century modernism. According to the artist and critic James Gleeson[230] the categories of portraiture, genre, history and landscape were outmoded. Larger questions about art seemed to take on some urgency in the 1970s. There had been a noticeable shift away from the stricture of conventional portraiture. Only flexibility in determining the nature of a portrait and in applying the rules of the Archibald Prize could assure its future. In 1976 Brett Whiteley's first winning picture, ***Self-portrait in the studio***, was expected to cause controversy, as it was acknowledged that it was unconventional for an Archibald entry.

By the start of the 1990s the critics, who by now had been commenting for half a century about what the Archibald was allegedly doing to art, were becoming more prolix and trenchant in their dislike of it. Terry Smith wrote that "From an historical viewpoint, the whole exercise is a bizarre example of the persistence of an anachronistic genre"[231], and that most of the portraits 'struggled between mediocrity and mendacity'.

Controversy, for example, emerged when it was discovered that John Bloomfield's 1975 photo-realist portrait of film director Tim Burstall was painted from a magazine photograph. The debate about the legitimacy of a portrait based on photographs was a gift to the media and the general public. Bloomfield had interpreted the Archibald rule about the subject being 'painted from life' as meaning 'the subject should be a real person and not someone of the imagination'. Despite there being some sympathy for Bloomfield's position, he was stripped of the award.

The 'painting from life' clause in the rules of the Archibald is now rarely invoked. Most artists who use photographs know their subjects personally, and they make their own photographic studies, rather than relying, as Bloomfield did, entirely on a single image from a magazine. There is debate about the degree to which painting 'from life' produces a 'more engaged' work that 'evokes the presence of the person', distilling understanding through the dynamic of the artist-

[229] James, Bruce *'The Archibald: it kind of grows on you' The Sydney Morning Herald*, 27 March 1999

[230] Gleeson entered the Archibald for the first time in 1994 with his *Portrait of the artist as an evolving landscape*, which was 'taken to the bosom of the art community' but was not awarded the prize. He said it 'caught what I looked like and what I felt'

[231] Ross, Peter, *Let's Face It: The History of the Archibald Prize - The Archibald Story,* 1999, p.99

sitter relationship. The use of photographs may in fact reflect "the contemporary phenomenon of capturing people in a moment of time – an art form which is very different from the distilled understanding that draftsmanship tends to bring."[232] The Bloomfield case became "just one more episode in the accumulation of incidents, controversies and criticisms that the Archibald would always attract and generate".[233]

The 1988 Archibald competition read like a television sitcom. Added to the pathos and litigation[234] was a much-boosted Archibald purse of $20,000, thanks to the largesse of the Bicentennial Authority , who also came up with $5,000 for a People's Choice Award. Elwyn Lynn stated that "Everyone knows what a portrait should be and everyone is wildly vocal when the Archibald breaks out. This year, the public can vote, which will further the error that one man's opinion is as good as another."[235] Democracy in art was a futile business as far as the critic was concerned, as he believed that the best art would receive less praise than criticism. In 1988, five thousand people voted in the first People's Choice Award, which has now become an institution in its own right, though some would claim that winning this award is more a matter of the sitter's fame or notoriety, than the aesthetic value of the work. It is interesting that in 2003 Chinese-Australian artists, Daju Zhao and Shen Jiawei[236], one of Australia's most successful portrait painters, won the People's Choice Awards for the Archibald and the Salon des Refusés respectively. Shen's success reflects a larger movement – that of Chinese-Australian artists at large, and portraiture in particular, gaining ground and profile over the last 20 years. One-fifth of the works selected for the 2008 Archibald exhibition were by Chinese-born artists, reflecting the changing demographic of contemporary Australian art, in which Chinese émigrés are destined to play an ever-greater role. It also reflects the shifting tastes of the trustees.

Some artists know that the Archibald is a media event and paint to the crowds. Bruce James claimed in 1999 that "prizes such as the Archibald are exercises in ratings, in tickling cash

---

[232] Arndt, Bettina ,'*Archibald poser', The Sydney Morning Herald,* 9 March 2004
[233] Ross, Peter *Let's Face It: The History of the Archibald Prize - The Archibald Story,* 1999, p. 75
[234] Relating to the impact of Gallery Director Edmond Capon's comments about Vlados Meskenas's portrait of Rene Rivkin
[235] Ross, Peter, *Let's Face It: The History of the Archibald Prize - The Archibald Story,* 1999, p.95
[236] Shen, arriving in Australia in 1989 with fellow Chinese artists Wang Xu and Huang He, is now 11-times Archibald, and 4-times Moran finalist and Sulman winner, with numerous works in state and national collections in both Australia and China.

register keys and pitching to the crowds...Sometimes, the very last criterion that seems to apply to this razzle-dazzle, the three-ringed event is an aesthetic one."[237] The media, especially the electronic media, feed off the Archibald 'like schoolboys at a fridge'. "The buzz on prize day, the palpable atmosphere like that of an opening night at the theatre or a major sporting event, the colour and movement at the Gallery are tailor-made for television and there is always a chance of controversy and pique".[238] There was massive media interest in the legal challenge to the 2004 award of both the main prize and the People's Choice award to Craig Ruddy for his portrayal of David Gulpillil, creating extraordinary publicity for the Archibald. Television, if not the arbiter of the prize, was fast becoming the single most important transmitter of the Archibald images. The competition was now geared especially to it, with the result announced in time for the afternoon news services, while the evening bulletins compete to present a smart package of images and 'sound grabs' which preferably include the Gallery director, the artist and the sitter.

Even if, in any given year there is no real controversy, the Archibald generates a level of 'event glamour', often compared with the Melbourne Cup. It also provides the Art Gallery of New South Wales a profile that other galleries 'would kill for'. "In an age largely unsympathetic to portraiture as a contemporary art form, all the customary antipathy of artists and public is suspended one a year through the lure of a rich prize, saturation media coverage and public attendances in the tens of thousands."[239] The Archibald attracts large numbers of visitors to the NSW Art Gallery, with many more visiting the touring exhibition as it tours to Melbourne and regional galleries, accompanied by extensive publicity.

The Archibald is one of the Gallery's biggest money spinners, effectively subsidising some of the Gallery's more obscure exhibitions. The art critic, John McDonald, describes the Archibald as 'a popular entertainment that tells us little about the state of Australian art and less about Australian society – beyond the fact of our underlying fondness for portraiture"[240]. It appeals to a public to some extent alienated from most forms of contemporary art.

---

[237] James, Bruce, '*The Archibald: it kind of grows on you'*, *The Sydney Morning Herald,* 27 March 1999
[238] Ross, Peter *Let's Face It: The History of the Archibald Prize - The Archibald Story,* 1999, p.96
[239] Ross, Peter *Let's Face It: The History of the Archibald Prize - The Archibald Story,* 1999, p.115
[240] McDonald, John, '*Portrait of the prize* , *The Sydney Morning Herald,* 30 April-1 May 2005

Even though the Archibald extends over a longer period each year, there is a very familiar feeling about it. The craftily-staged ***Packing Room*** and ***People's Choice*** prizes, spin-off exhibitions, regional tours, prizes[241], performances, concerts, lunches and talks have turned what began as a single event into a 'season' of events, ensuring that it overshadows the coinciding ***Wynne, Sulman*** and ***Australian Photographic*** prizes. However commentators, painters and members of the general public alike have criticised the trustees who have dared to make judgements about art, often differing in their opinion from that of the general public who visit the exhibition. This is evident in the number of times the Trustees' choice is not the winner of the People's Choice Award.

In March 2003 however, artist Marlon Dalton claimed, when submitting his portrait of Mungo McCallum, that the Archibald now "encompasses one of the greatest Australian values, that we all possess, we like to think it's a classless society...the Archibald is known as the great leveller, anyone can come and take the Archibald out...There's that intrigue that maybe we could do it...if you're not one of the elite."[242]. For years the TAB has refused to take bets on the result of the Archibald , not only because of the short time between the hanging of the initial selection and the final judging, but because there is no known method for calculating the odds.[243] In 2006 for the first time, Sportingbet, took bets on the who would win the prize, adding to publicity and the controversy.

Despite the fact that the ***Doug Moran National Portrait Prize*** was worth much more in terms of prize money, the Archibald still attracts twice as many entries. There is a great deal at stake in terms of money, publicity, kudos and prestige. Winning the Archibald gives an artist's career a marked boost, and the Art Gallery of NSW clearly benefits as well. The fallout from the much-anticipated results, also include bruised egos and ruined friendships.

---

[241] In 2005, 30 regional galleries were eager to host the regional tour of the Archibald, but only 4 or 5 were selected to be involved. In 2004, 50,000 people visited the exhibition in regional galleries. Each year, different regional galleries are selected to participate in the tour.

[242] '*Marlon Dalton on the Archibald Prize'*, Presenter: Peter Gunders (ABC New England North West NSW) 7 March 2003 http://www.abc.net.au/newengland/stories/s798396.htm

[243] Wyndham, Francis '*The noble art of portraiture', Look Magazine,* Art Gallery of New South Wales, March 2000

In 1991 the 'official reject exhibition', the ***Salon de Refusés*** was set up at the S.H.Ervin Gallery. This selection was made from those portraits not selected for inclusion in the NSW Gallery's exhibition. Initially some of the artists chosen for the ***Salon de Refusés*** were anxious about their inclusion in an exhibition of 'rejects', but it benefits from the omissions and oversights of the Archibald and Wynne selections, often including works by previous Archibald and Moran winners. By gathering the best of the works rejected by the Trustees of the Art Gallery of NSW, the ***Salon des Refusés***, frequently described as more interesting than the Archibald and Wynne exhibitions, throws a clear light on Trustees' selections, giving us an indication of the overall quality of entries and the relative boldness or conservatism of the judges. As early as 1993 the ***Salon*** had truly 'arrived', with past Archibald winners Judy Cassab, Eric Smith and Garry Shead happy to be included. The 1997 Archibald was a media gift for a number of reasons. The Trustees' rejection of Evert Ploeg's ***Bananas in pyjamas***, provided the ***Salon des Refusés*** with a media coup, and plenty of publicity. At the end of 2003, portraits from Victorian artists that did not 'make the grade' for the Archibald went on display at Montsalvat's Barn Gallery in Eltham in Victoria. As with the Archibald, the public was also invited to vote for their favourite for the People's Choice Award for the Salon de Refusés.

Portraiture might be seen by many as long past its use-by date, overtaken by both photography and current art practices, including the emergence of new forms of portraiture in the last couple of decades. There is little doubt that photography is the most pervasive and popular medium for portraiture today. It is a truly democratic medium in the sense that that there are now more cameras and photographers than ever before in history. "It's good that Australia is no longer cast as the northern hemisphere's notion of hell. Still, we need to be wary about what kind of heaven we flatter ourselves that we live in."[244] Max Dupain's photographed figures had exemplary classical physiques, for example in his '*Sunbaker*'- Peter Conrads identifies not only a homage to classical Greece but an unsettling similarity to the eugenic statutory of the German Third Reich. Dupain's son, Rex, has deliberately photographed his own versions of his father's iconic images, showing Australians as 'multi-coloured people of all shapes and sizes, not white, idealised acolytes of Venus and Adonis."[245]

---

[244] Conrad, Peter, *Tales of Two Hemispheres* (2004) Page 16
[245] Conrad, Peter, *Tales of Two Hemispheres* (2004) Page 16

Distinctions have been drawn between photojournalism and the manufactured image, but a portrait is primarily about the sitter. There continues to be some debate about the ability of highly staged celebrity portraits to reveal anything about the subject or what their life is like.[246]. Michael Desmond, Senior Curator at the National Portrait Gallery, however argues that the photographic celebrity portrait is a 'direct heir' to the court paintings of an earlier era, which were commissioned to display wealth, power and the worth of the sitter.

We are moving into an exceptional time for portraiture as the art world embraces the digital age. "Traditional portraiture is responding to the application of new technologies and this imaging process is reshaping our interpretation and reading of the face."[247] Access to computers and the use of the internet to source and digitalise images is pervasive. Artists are using digital technologies as alternatives to traditional media, offering the possibility of a new aesthetic, easy manipulation and distribution of both still and moving images. Traditional photography, once slated as the 'executioner of painting', now faces a crisis of its own with the rise of these digital technologies. The digital revolution has made photography itself relatively easy, inexpensive and accessible. If the technical prowess of the photographer is no longer important, then, as Michael Desmond suggests, the measure of a photographer's fame may be in their ability to capture and iconic image[248], ideally of a celebrity. This raises the question of whether the status and recognisability of the sitter are the main criteria for great portraiture. For some there is a sense of growing obsolescence similar to that once felt by painters.

Portraiture, with its focus on the recognisable image of the individual face has been resistant to change despite the many styles and movements of the 20th century and the adoption of new digital technologies in the last decade. Despite the broader range of media available to the artist, according to Michael Desmond, "the effect if the digital age is probably less on form and more on society."[249]

---

[246] McFarlane, Robert (photography critic for the Herald) as quoted by Morgan, Joyce *'Portrait of Our Times' The Sydney Morning Herald*, 4-6 October 2008,
[247] Desmond, Michael *'Technical Terminology' Portrait 36*, Winter 2010, National Portrait Gallery of Australia
[248] Desmond, Michael, *'Seduce Amuse Entertain'*, *Portrait* 26, Summer 2007, National Portrait Gallery of Australia,
[249] Desmond, Michael *'Technical Terminology' Portrait 36*, Winter 2010, National Portrait Gallery of Australia;

In 2003 the Archibald spawned the ***Australian Photographic Portrait Prize***, sponsored by the Citigroup Private Bank[250], running concurrently with the Archibald, Wynne and Sulman Prizes exhibitions at the Art Gallery of New South Wales. There was no requirement that the artist or the subject be Australian. Peter Hill suggested[251] that the Archibald needed "to reinvigorate itself' by expanding its definition of portraiture in a more profound way than simply setting up an alternative photographic prize. It is interesting to note that, also in 2003, London's National Portrait Gallery launched its ***Schweppes Photographic Portrait Prize***, as a continuation of the Gallery's long tradition of championing the work of the best portrait photographers. The inaugural exhibition was highly successful.

With the demise of the ***Citigroup Portrait Prize*** at the Art Gallery of NSW in 2006, there was no longer a national photographic portrait prize. It was revived at the National Portrait Gallery in July 2007 with a new sponsor and the intention that is should become an annual event. By the closing date some 1500 entries had been submitted. The judges' selection of the seventy-five finalists was not based on the fame of the photographer or on the sitter's celebrity, but on the individual photograph's effectiveness as a portrait – the impact on the view and its ability to communicate something about the sitter. Whilst there are some well-known faces there are in fact few celebrities or illustrious figures, unlike the Archibald Prize. The diverse range of portraits elicits a variety of emotional responses. This exhibition, which opened on 1 December 2007 does not claim to be a snapshot of Australia or an even-handed view of the Australian demographic, but sought to present a strong field of innovative and insightful portraits. Inevitably, however, the perceived immediacy of photographic portraits and the selection of a broader group of sitters will record will record shifts in the Australian demographic and what we choose to document.

Held annually the Bald Archy's, initiated by Peter Batey, are an irreverent dig at the stuffier Archibalds. These "caricatures, which are portraits in essence, are almost vestigial, no more than

[250] The inaugural $35,000 prize in 2003 attracted a field of 571 entries
[251] Hill, Peter, *'Face Values', The Sydney Morning Herald, (Weekend Edition),* 1-2 May 2004

a lick of ink or gouache"[252] gives artists the opportunity to comment more incisively without fear or favour on their subjects and the society in which they live.

In 1986 the Sydney-based nursing home entrepreneur Doug Moran initiated the biennial (becoming annual from 2006 onwards) '*Doug Moran National Portrait Prize'* as a staunch defence of traditional values of craftsmanship in portraiture which he felt were being neglected by many artists, and as a serious challenge to the Archibald's alleged departure from traditional portraiture. The response of artists and the public was enthusiastic from the start. Entries for the Moran Prize are required to be representational and 'good likenesses' of their subjects, who must be Australian citizens, but there is no requirement that they should be well known or 'distinguished' in any way, and the award is judged by 'art experts'[253]. This, it was hoped, would create the very conditions for the presentation and collection of interesting works, depicting a cross-section of the Australian community.

John McDonald asserts that the Moran Prize entries tend to be even more mediocre than the Archibald, but that the problem lies, not so much with the prizes themselves, but with the state of political and cultural leadership, more interested in mediocrity and monetary value than artistic excellence.[254]. The prize had been shedding its ultra-conservative tag with each competition, and the 2004 selection of finalists confirmed this trend, representing diverse portraiture styles. Art critic Louise Schwartzkoff identifies in the 2009 award, an emphasis on more adventurous contemporary work[255] with the prize awarded to Ben Quilty for his portrait of Jimmy Barnes.

The winning portraits, from the first award in 1988 onwards, were to be acquired to form the Australian Portrait Collection of the Tweed River Regional Art Gallery – an outcome that has faltered in the face of the prize's own controversies and recent litigation. By 2003, much to the dismay of its critics, the Archibald Prize seemed healthier than ever whilst its main rival, the richer Moran Prize was struggling under the weight of legal wrangles and was at risk of

---

[252] James, Bruce, '*The Archibald: it kind of grows on you', The Sydney Morning Herald*, 27 March,1999

[253] In 2009 the judges were Nick Mitzevich (Director, University of Queensland Art Museum), artist Darren Sylvester

[254] McDonald, John, *'It's like a sausage factory', The Sydney Morning Herald,* 1-2 April 2006

[255] Schwartzkoff, Louise, ' *Smashed rocker and dry land scoop art's richest prizes', The Sydney Morning Herald*, 11 March 2009

collapsing. A long–running feud erupted between the high profile members of the Tweed community and the Moran family over funds held by the Tweed River Regional Art Gallery Foundation. An out-of-court settlement was reached in 2004[256], when the Morans legally cut all ties between the prize and the Tweed Region, ending their sixteen-year partnership. The settlement was made in time for the 2004 competition to get under way, but a new home will need to be found. The Moran Prize returned to full family control, and will continue to tour regionally. However it will be years before they will be able to boast about a substantial collection of winners. Potential permanent homes for the collection include the State Library of NSW, the Art Gallery of Western Australia and even the National Portrait Gallery in Canberra.

The enduring popularity of portrait competitions like the Archibald Prize, the Portia Geach Memorial Award, which is Australia's most prestigious portrait prize for female artists, and the Moran Prize, shows that Australians retain the greatest affection for images of our contemporaries, created with light, paint and imagination. New forms of portraiture, including photorealism, have however emerged in recent decades. The Australian public is more likely to see more contemporary or experimental forms in the Sydney Biennale, or in private galleries, rather than in the exhibitions from the various portraiture prizes. The sheer volume of entries[257] means that high quality works will always slip through the net, and some painters become virtual fixtures regardless of the quality of their work.

Portraiture in Australia, with its long history, shifting conventions and its controversies, is alive and well. Portraiture has been always held a significant place in the development of national collections and exhibitions, portraying those deemed to be significant in national life for whatever reason, or sufficiently wealthy or influential to be able to afford to commission portraits from artists of the day.

---

[256] The Morans retained ownership of the 2002 winning portrait, whilst the Tweed River Regional Art Gallery took ownership of all the winning portraits, seven in all, between 1988 and 2000, plus thirty odd works by finalists. These will remain on permanent display, but as they have no further claims on the prize the significance of this collection will necessarily fade, and this will impact on the gallery's profile. They are contemplating initiating a similar prize but on a smaller scale.

[257] In 2006, for example 2683 entries were submitted for the *Archibald, Wynne, Sulman* and *Citigroup Photographic Portrait Prizes*, of which 137 items were hung at the AGNSW. A further 57 works were selected for the *Salon des Refusés*. 36 works were hung for the Moran Prize, selected from 423 entries.

The current diversity in media, subject matter, stylistic options and forums for the display and collection, and the level of critical and academic interest, indicates that the Australian 'fascination with faces' reflects some level of appreciation of the complexities of contemporary Australia, and at least one aspect of the shifting Australian identity – an identity that will continue to evolve, as reflected particularly in gallery exhibition programmes and in state and national collections in Australia.

# THE RISE AND RISE OF INDIGENOUS ART

The 'museum' sector functions in a way that continues to be complex and multi-layered. Initially museums in their diversity provided meeting places for the public to engage with what was unfamiliar, distant and exotic. The publically owned, or significantly subsidized, museums mediate many of society's basic values through their collections, displays and buildings. These presentations are increasingly subject to challenge as the community becomes both more diverse and assertive in holding these institutions to account and wanting to shift the balance in what is collected, presented and interpreted. Contemporary museums can be seen as critical to a nation's understanding of itself, at least potentially providing significant representation to subaltern groups within the community in an environment in which the nation's identity is increasingly fluid and multifaceted

The relationship between indigenous and non-indigenous national identities has been subject to significant debate and much of the criticism directed at both the National Museum of Australia and Te Papa Tongrewa centring on the perceived imbalance between the representation of non-indigenous culture. There is a recognition within the museum sector that there is no single stable interpretation of national identity to be presented. The museum's role is more about suggesting questions and alternatives interpretations.

Museums, as institutions, provide an important role in framing a society's present and past history, as they become more and more 'interpreters of visual culture' and provide a forum for discussion about 'community', memory and identity. Museums shape knowledge by collecting and exhibiting items of cultural significance, including Indigenous works, which are increasingly incorporated into the mainstream collections and histories as presented within institutional spaces. Indigenous works are now included in the collections of Australia's public art museums, and in significant private and corporate collections, and are represented with increasing regularity in major exhibitions, domestically and internationally. These shifts demonstrate an acknowledgement that any discernable 'Australian identity' is diverse and multi-layered – more complex than previously portrayed – and must take the Indigenous population and its material culture into account.

Australia has witnessed almost two hundred years of cultural disinterest and neglect in relation to Indigenous peoples and their culture. Despite being one of the longest continuous traditions of art in the world, dating back at least fifty millennia, Indigenous art remained relatively unknown until the 1950s and it was not until the 1980s that it began to enter the collections of most Australian galleries, or gain broad recognition as an important facet of Australian art. Museums have a key role in framing any society's history, and need to constantly reframe the collection in ways that will keep it relevant to the contemporary audience, whilst being conscious of the heritage of founders and collectors. Questions emerge about the ways in which museums shape knowledge by collecting and exhibiting Indigenous art, including the use of architecture and appropriate exhibition spaces, and the role played by curatorial interventions in shaping narratives, creating dynamic dialogues between works, display devices and audiences.

Western scholarship clearly wants to continue to engage with Indigenous art, though this engagement has not always been easy. It is clear that there is no discreet 'body of work' as such, but rather there are across Australia, Aboriginal groups who identify themselves variously and there is a diverse body of Aboriginal art work – from "the ancient representations of rock art, through the barks and boards of the Central Desert and Northern Territory, and the acrylic and canvas work of the Papunya artists, to the installations, paintings, sculptures and photographs of contemporary artists, some of whom do not identify as Aboriginal artists (though they do identify as Aboriginal)."[258]

There is still an unstable, and sometimes contradictory, relationship between 'settler' art and 'Indigenous art', as Indigenous artists increasingly look at ways to present their own stories and interactions with the rest of the Australian community. "The advent of contemporary Indigenous visual arts from Australia as a unique presence in world art is a phenomenon that runs against the grain of Western modernism...At odds with a premise of modernity, to erase the old with the

[258] Webb, Jen, *'Negotiating Alterity: Indigenous and 'Outsider' art' Third Text*, Volume 16, Issue 2, 2002

new, is the apparent conundrum of the world's oldest continuous culture being the wellspring of a dynamic contemporary art movement."[259]

The display of indigenous people and their artefacts largely reflected the interests of Western science which had been long collected, dissected, appraised and, more recently, photographed indigenous people and indigenous effects for its own advancement and profit. Nowhere was this more evident than in colonial Australia. In both its popular and scientific forms, the scrutiny of Aboriginal people created and popularised racial stereotypes, facilitating comparisons between 'the savage' and 'the civilised'.

Early European explorers and settlers portrayed manifestations of Indigenous culture not as art, but as ethnographic evidence. Indigenous Australians were placed on the lowest rung of the evolutionary ladder, regarding them as 'a people without art'. Works were produced to fulfil traditional cultural needs, and this continues to be the case to varying degrees. Indigenous cultural practices spread across the country, embracing a number of distinct long-established artistic traditions and takes many forms. Regional variations abound, reflecting the diversity of religious beliefs, ceremonies, social structures, languages, and particularly, the range of artistic practices and idioms. Indigenous concepts of country go far beyond landscape, and are a far more complex expression of identity.

The perception that Aboriginal culture was 'primitive but not ancient' remained dominant until the 1960s, when John Mulvaney's use of carbon-dating techniques demonstrated not only the longevity of the culture but also its evolution and development, thus acknowledging that it had a temporal dynamic of its own. This triggered complex ongoing debate about the relationship between the deep time as described by Western archaeology and that described by the Aboriginal dreamtime'.

Indigenous curator and scholar Wally Caruana argues that "Aboriginal art, once admired solely for its antiquity; has now staked its claim on the artistic map of the modern world, as being

---

[259] Perkins, Hetti, *'One Sun One Moon: New book on Indigenous art offers a view from within', Look Magazine*, Art Gallery of New South Wales, June 2007

among the great expressions of the human spirit and human experience."[260] – an enigmatic product holding multiple values simultaneously. Indigenous art has steadily gained a wider audience from that restricted to the ceremonial and local milieux, to the first collections made by outsiders, researchers and collectors to the international world of art. It is now one of the world's most visible art forms. For Caruana, the only way to start learning about indigenous art is to look at as many works as possible in museums and reputable galleries – many feel more familiar than they really are as images, often second-rate, seem to be everywhere in public and tourist spaces, and sometimes in commercial galleries.

Whilst works on canvas and board have, in effect, created new forms of Indigenous art, innovative artists have continued to enliven traditional forms. Indigenous works are increasingly incorporated into the mainstream histories of the nation within institutional spaces and are now included in the collections of Australia's public art museums, private collections both locally and internationally, and are represented with increasing regularity in major exhibitions, reflecting a significant shift in Western conceptions of what art is, challenging assumptions about the attributes of 'fine art'. Inclusion within the category of fine art is no longer challenged in Australia, though it can still be the subject of challenge elsewhere in the world.

The art historian Howard Morphy outlines the historical process of inclusion of art works traditionally excluded from the 'hallowed walls of the fine art galleries of the West'[261] and the significance of that change in the discourse about Indigenous art. The process of their inclusion reflects changes in Western conceptions of what art is, involving a reassessment of the concept of 'primitive art', an associated shift in ideas about of what can be identified as art, and an increased understanding of art as a commodity. The discourse surrounding Indigenous art was shifting. These factors emerged alongside global political and economic developments which have, in some contexts, empowered indigenous artists. The material culture of indigenous societies has been changed as they have been incorporated within wider global processes. These change processes are highly complex, impacting, for example, on the dealers, galleries and other

---

[260] Caruana, Wally, *Aboriginal Art* (New Edition) Thames & Hudson, London, 2003 p.227

[261] Morphy, Howard *'Seeing Aboriginal Art in the Gallery' Humanities Research: Museums of the Future – the Future of Museums* Vol.VIII, No.1, 2001 (http://www.anu.edu/hrc/publications/hr/issue1_2001/article05.htm 23/10/2003)

'gatekeepers' in their interaction with Indigenous communities and individual artists, and on issues surrounding authenticity[262], the ownership and appropriation of imagery and objects. "Notions of authenticity still frame the popular reception of the art; however, cultural critics invariably insist on its contemporaneity."[263] Despite the modern materials and format of desert acrylic paintings, and the opinion of critics, the artists themselves insist on the abiding authenticity of their art – it could be argued that tradition is only a problem for the modernists. Traditional Indigenous values and ceremonies may, as they always have, continue to be relevant to the place and time in the present.

Like the theft of artefacts and the display of indigenous people, appropriation raises issues of power, ownership and compensation. Admiration for another society is not necessarily free of racial stereotypes. Most early acts of appropriation were aimed at utilising selected aspects of Aboriginal parlance to help inform bush mythology. By the 1930s, a range of intellectuals and artists were turning to indigenisation as a possible means of replacing what they saw as naive nationalism of existing rural mythology with something more cerebral and mature. In this they were influenced by modernism's interest in the primitive as a window on both the lost memories of the alienated individual and the collective unconscious of the West.

Morphy identifies two myths – the myth that somehow an anthropological approach to Indigenous art created its 'otherness', separating it from Western art works, and that classifying works as 'art' imposed a Western categorisation upon them. In practice, there have often been interdisciplinary tensions between anthropologists and art historians, museum and art gallery curators about where and how best to display and provide commentary on Indigenous works.

Morphy argues that "the imperatives to produce art for traditional purposes continue, and the expanded environment in which Aboriginal art operates has created further compelling reasons for Aboriginal artists to express the values of their culture to the wider world in which they

---

[262] Claims of authenticity and modernity are frequently made, for example in relation to desert acrylic painting, they are rarely made at the same time. Either the paintings are traditional and not modern, or modern and not traditional.
[263] McLean, Ian, *'Postcolonial Traffic: William Kentridge and the Aboriginal Desert Painters' Third Text*, Volume 17, Issue 3, 2003

live."[264] Much indigenous work is spiritually inclined, but that spirituality can be complex. Designs and symbols may be used in a multitude of combinations and contexts and interpreted according to the ritual, social and political situations in which it is presented. Through the use of ancestrally inherited designs, artists assert their identity, and their rights and responsibilities. Over recent years some art forms have flourished whilst others have dwindled, and interest in some traditional forms seems to be re-emerging. The adoption of new technologies and materials has led to the creation of new art forms which often complement rather than replace existing ones.

Indigenous artists have always used their visual language to ensure that personal and collective narratives are recorded and passed on to successive generations. In the ceremonial sphere, some art may only be created and viewed by those initiated to the proper level of awareness. The regulations which apply to the ownership of... and rights to...land and 'Dreamings' in traditional societies are, with varying degrees of modifications, carried over into the making of art intended for the wider, public domain. Issues around the ownership and use of designs belonging to others, without the appropriate permission, has become more significant in a world where the designs are broadcast more widely than ever before.

Originally, Dr Vivien Johnson claims, the desert artists did not regard receiving payment for their works as selling them, but "as returning the ceremonial gift which the painter had bestowed by giving that representation of his 'Dreamings' into the purchaser's keeping"[265]. Artists have since become more adept at negotiating with European commercial concepts and practices, but their art-making continues to be informed by the underlying framework that sees the painting enterprise as a cultural exchange with western society.

Community-based art centres, acting like galleries, represent a stable of local artists in a particular centre, arranging exhibitions and sales, and providing materials and studio space. These centres, incorporated as cooperative of artists, also take responsibility copyright matters and payments to artists, ensuring they are paid properly for their work. Most staff are appointed

---

[264] Caruana, Wally, *Aboriginal Art,* 2003, p.20

[265] Johnson, Vivien, *'Painted dreams: the money belongs to the ancestors', Look Magazine* (Art Gallery of New South Wales, December 1995/January 1996

from outside the particular community largely to avoid local bias or favouritism. The various government funding models have been developed to promote the independence of these centres. The community art centre model isn't perfect, and there have been significant shifts in thinking about the priorities for these centres.

There will continue to be a strong market for the very best Indigenous art. Indigenous art is remarkably valuable aesthetically, economically[266]. The Indigenous market is now firmly established in Australia and is a burgeoning multi-million dollar export industry, and auction houses are selling indigenous artworks for record prices. Those collectors who study the market closely are likely to see a longer term benefit. Interest has diversified, swinging away from the traditional heavyweights towards less well-known artists and to those practising in different styles. Critic and dealer, Michael Reid, amongst others, cautions that one by-product of the booming domestic and international demand for Indigenous art has been the focus by many unscrupulous art dealers on supplying volume as opposed to quality contemporary art, describing the community art centre structure as critical in countering the activities of such dealers as they entice artists to work outside the centres.

The way in which the market operates – how works become available and circulate, how values are determined and money managed, the potential impact of unscrupulous ethically inappropriate activities – is clearly significant. Australian newspapers frequently carry reports of artists being cheated by unscrupulous dealers[267], who take advantage of the conditions and politics within in many communities and may undermine the mutually supportive relationships between artists and art centres – there are ninety odd art centres across the remote north, west and centre of Australia, and virtually each one is different from its neighbour due to the particular needs of its community, as defined by the Aboriginal governance of that centre. The problems are widespread enough to be of ongoing concern, and sections of the Aboriginal art industry are crying out for increased government scrutiny and regulation. Relations between some private

[266] By 1999 it had achieved an annual turnover of AU$100million (Page 138 Jan Webb *'Negotiating Alterity: Indigenous and 'Outsider Art'*).

[267] O'Brien, Geraldine, *'Australia's Indigenous Art: Success breads exploitation – and now ideas for improving artists' lives'*, *Look Magazine* (AGNSW) July 2006. The 2007 Senate Report, *Securing the Future*, also revealed widespread exploitation of Indigenous artists, and recommended increased funding to the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission to enable it to better investigate dealers selling suspect 'authentic Aboriginal art', and at least a voluntary code of practise for the industry.

dealers and community or government-funded art centres became so bitter that six art centres boycotted the 2008 Telstra Art Award because of the involvement of the controversial private dealer, John Ioannou[268]. The current boom in Indigenous art as a speculative investment, the insatiable demand for Indigenous art and the lack of strategies for regulating the industry contribute to the problems both for artists and art centres. There have also been added pressures on the art centres brought on by the former Coalition Government's Intervention in the Northern Territory.

Whilst institutions have been buying works outside the art centres which has a negative impact on the centres and the communities, both Sotheby's and to an extent Christies, have stated that they will only accept works that originated at the art centres confident in the quality of the works and that the monies paid are being correctly channelled. However the industry is changing, with a number of significant artists choosing to work outside the art centres.

Unfortunately some of the massive following attributed to Indigenous work is geared to investment potential rather than an appreciation of the artworks in their own right. With sales devoted to Indigenous art now featuring regularly on each year's auction calendar, it is easy to forget how recently Indigenous art began to be treated as a serious are for investment. The auction houses, such as Christies and Sotheby's, played a large part in creating this success. Fifteen years ago a major auction catalogue may have included one or two indigenous works with modest estimates. In 1996 Sotheby's combined Indigenous art with contemporary art in the one sale, and the next year Sotheby's mounted its first auction to concentrate exclusively on Indigenous art[269]. The turnover at the major auction houses continues to bring high prices, though rarely to the artists themselves. Sotheby's is one of a growing number trying to secure artists a better deal. As the market for Indigenous art has developed, the last decade has also seen the establishment of a health secondary market, and there is an increasing trend to offer works

---

[268] Gibson, Joel, *'Artists locked in 'battery farms', worker says', The Sydney Morning Herald*, 29 July 2008 & McKenny, Leesha *'Meet the Mr Big of Indigenous art', The Sydney Morning Herald.* 30 July 2008

[269] In 1993 just over $300,000 worth of Indigenous art was traded on the local auction market. In 2003 some $7.9 million worth of Aboriginal art was sold at Auction. Gallery sales made ten times that amount. Sotheby's, establishing a separate Aboriginal art department in 1992, was the undoubted leader in the auction stakes, tending to deal in the top end of the market (Reid, Michael , *How to Buy and Sell Art*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 2004)

for auction rather than trading them through the gallery from which the works were originally obtained.

The publishing industry has produced a diverse range of books over recent years to reflect something of the range of artistic traditions and current practice. Commentators and critics have, as a rule, not genuinely engaged with Indigenous art – accounts tend to remain narrative or descriptive. The relationships between scholars, critics, dealers, artists and the viewing public, however, are not completely comfortable in their engagement with the diverse body of indigenous artworks.

There has been a paradigm shift in the appreciation of Indigenous art – a move illustrated by Yiribana Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Gallery's exhibition programme (Art Gallery of NSW), the increased exhibition space allocated within Sydney's Museum of Contemporary Art (MCA)[270] and the Queensland Art Gallery, the broad collection in the Ian Potter Centre (National Gallery Victoria), the opening of a new indigenous gallery at the Tasmanian Museum and Gallery in December 2007, and the National Gallery of Australia's current construction of specifically designed indigenous gallery space, due to be opened in September 2010..

The National Gallery of Australia (NGA) opened its doors to the public in 1982, during a time of burgeoning interest in Indigenous art. Whilst other public museums in Australia already housed major collections of longer standing, the National Gallery "formulated a policy to document and represent the continuing and evolving traditions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art in light of the dynamic nature of indigenous artistic practice reflecting a diversity of experience."[271] This is now the largest collection of indigenous art in the world, holding some 7000 pieces of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art[272], and is intended to reflect the various themes, contexts and motivations that exist in the art of indigenous Australiana artists across the country, unlike many of the State-based collections that are skewed towards 'the local'. Even allowing for

---

[270] The Arnott's Collection of Arnhem Land bark paintings ('*They are Mediating: Bark Paintings from the MCA's Arnott's Collection*') was finally exhibited in mid-2008, occupying a whole floor of the MCA. An accompanying catalogue includes contributes to the appreciation of the exhibition

[271] Caruana, Wally & Lendo, Nigel (Eds), *The Painters of the Wagilag Sisters Story 1937-1997*, National Gallery of Australia, 1997), p.17

[272] About 600 items will be on permanent display in the 11 new galleries, due to be opened in late September 2010

the representative nature of the NGA's collection, there are areas of specialisation, such as bark painting. The collection also has significant holdings of works by major individual figures in indigenous art. In 1989 the National Gallery held its first major survey exhibition ***'Aboriginal Art: The Continuing Tradition'***, which included over 500 works displayed along thematic and stylistic lines. In the new indigenous galleries there will be rooms devoted to early Papunya works, textiles, the Kimberley region, Torres Strait Islander art and urban work, among other. Works by indigenous artists will also be dispersed throughout the rest of the Gallery, 'escaping the rubric of indigenous art to stand under that of, say, abstraction or contemporary photography'[273]. Along with permanent displays, there have also been major retrospectives of the works of Albert Namatjira and Rover Thomas amongst others, and the continuation of the Telstra ***National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Award***[274], originally the ***National Aboriginal Art Award*** established in 1984, and the inaugural '***National Indigenous Art Triennial'***, opening at the NGA in October 2007.

A number of writers on 'primitive arts' stress that without a knowledge of the purpose and meaning of the symbols in such art, the 'outsider' is only left with a pleasing design without meaning, and appreciation is then an intellectual exercise in pursuit of an aesthetic understanding. For most observers, the initial response to a work is to its representational elements – its subject matter – because of meaning and association. If a work is removed from its setting or context – way from the community to a place where these associations, its purpose and meaning are not known, other values must be found for our appreciation. "The rapport between the artist and this subject must be judged on the way he intuitively interprets his subject by his skill and technique into a visual unity".[275] An object can have meaning and significance without necessarily having any particular quality of form. Meaning in this sense is restricted and literal. A work of art can however, have a life of its own, acquiring a universal significance, an elementary and universal meaning.

---

[273] Catherine Keenan '*An outsider joins the dots' The Sydney Morning Herald (Weekend Edition)*, 28-29 August 2010

[274] Telstra started sponsoring the awards in 1992. The Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory (MAGNT) has been the driving force behind the awards.

[275] Tuckson, Tony, '*Aboriginal Art and the Western World' (1967) in* Stephen, Ann, McNamara, Andrew & Goad, Philip (Eds) *Modernism in Australia, Documents on Art, Design and Architecture 1917-1967*, The Miegunyah Press, Melbourne 2006,p 751

## 1. DEVELOPMENT OF EXHIBITIONS OF INDIGENOUS ART

Museums are renegotiating their role - from 'keepers of masterpieces and treasures' to 'interpreters of visual culture', concerned with culturally appropriate and responsible guardianship rather than ownership, especially in terms of indigenous items. This philosophical shift is reflected in changing practices. Museums are increasingly becoming spaces in which there is some degree of remembering, meeting and negotiation, comparison and contextualisation. This re-evaluation of the museum's role and museological/curatorial practices and the increasing public and market interest in indigenous art, has meant that there is considerable debate about the production, collection and presentation of indigenous art.

Much Indigenous art was uncollectible because it was 'secret', or site specific (e.g. in particular caves), or because it existed in temporary form such as body painting, sand sculpture, or ceremonial construction, 'Fine art' was viewed as a characteristic of 'high civilisation', and because most did not expect to find it, they did not see it in the work produced in Indigenous communities. Much Indigenous work fell outside the 19th classifications of art. Existing categories were inevitably challenged by Indigenous art, which could more easily find a place in the later categories created by conceptual art, minimalism, 'performance' art and even abstract expressionism.

During the nineteenth century Indigenous artefacts were collected. Some were sent to European scientific museums. Many of those that remained were eventually housed in local museums of natural history. Colonial governments also made collections intended for the great international exhibitions of Europe, where artefacts were used either as decoration or as examples of the curious manufacture of colonial culture. The complex religious structures around which Indigenous societies were built, and the intrinsic merit possessed by their cultural products were not recognised until the latter half of the century in the light of serious anthropological research. A notable step was the first exhibition of Indigenous art, ***Dawn of Art***, held in Adelaide in the late 1880s, featuring drawings on paper made by Indigenous prisoners at Palmerston Jail in Darwin. The first major exhibition to feature Indigenous art, ***Primitive Art***, wasn't organised until 1929 by the *National Museum of Victoria*. Items were drawn from various sources in

Australia, particularly the Baldwin Spencer collection, and a booklet[276], with articles by Charles Barrett and A.S. Kenyon was published for the occasion. Many items had already been seen in Melbourne, and the bark paintings were described as the highest achievement.

Prior to the Second World War, a handful of anthropologists in association with a few artists and curators advocated the recognition of Indigenous art. Leonhard Adam, a German-Australian anthropologist, challenged prevailing social Darwinian attitudes by arguing for the aesthetic possibilities of a post-colonial Indigenous art in an essay[277] submitted to *'Angry Penguins'* (Autumn 1944, pp42-50*)*. He included his proposals for fostering contemporary Australian artists in the revised and enlarged survey of primitive art published by Pelican throughout the 1950s. The present level of awareness of Indigenous art also owes much to certain non-Indigenous people, such as Pastor Johann Reuther[278] at Lake Eyre in 1903, Rex Battarbee[279] in Hermannsburg in the 1930s, the Reverend Chaseling at Yirrrkala and the Reverend Edgar Wells at Milingimbi in the 1950s. The central contradiction of indigenous art is that whilst it springs from the world's oldest living culture, it is generally dated to Geoffrey Bardon's encouragement of men in Papunya to paint a mural on a school wall in 1971. Bardon lived and worked in communities, promoting the understanding of Indigenous culture further afield, and encouraging artists to produce work for an outside audience.

---

[276] The catalogue was reprinted twice and revised in 1952, suggesting that there was a hunger, at least in Melbourne for this art and for information about it (*A History of the Great Divide: Urban versus Traditional Aboriginal Art* - a paper presented at Crossing Cultures, by Lindy Allen, Museum Victoria)

[277] Adam, Leonhard *'Has Australian Aboriginal Art a Future?'*(1944), *in* Stephen, McNamara, and Goad,(Eds) *Modernism in Australia, Documents on Art, Design and Architecture 1917-1967*, Melbourne 2006, pp448ff

[278]The first recorded example of innovation in desert art intended for sale appeared in 1903, with the production of more than 400 ***toas***[278] were made between 1903 and 1905 in response to the wish of the missionary, Pastor Johann Reuther, to build a collection of Aboriginal artefacts to raise funds for the mission. The ***toa*** collection was acquired by the South Australian Museum in 1907.

[279] Rex Batterbee (1893-1973), a traditional European watercolourist, who along with other white artists, had sought out the 'exotic' landscape of Central Australia in the 1930s, first visited the Lutheran Mission at Hermannsburg in 1932 with fellow artist John Gardner, introducing watercolour landscape painting in the European style. Two years later, when they returned, Pastor Albrecht asked them again to hold an exhibition of their paintings, which was seen by at least 300 Aboriginal people, including Albert Namatjira. Pastor Albrecht relayed Albert's request for paints and brushes to Batterbee, who returned in 1936 and took Namatjira on 2 expeditions – firstly to Palm Valley and the secondly to the MacDonnell Range area. Batterbee taught him the technique of watercolour. In return Namatjira taught him about the subjects they were to paint. Batterbee had become a mentor to Namatjira and in 1939 he moved permanently to Central Australia.

In 1941, an exhibition in Sydney featured Indigenous artefacts along with the works of non-Aboriginal painters and decorative artists using Indigenous designs of depicting Indigenous subjects. Whilst it heralded a growing awareness of Indigenous art, it misguidedly proclaimed its appropriation to foster a unique Australian identity.

For over 40 years Margaret Preston defied conventional wisdom by arguing the aesthetic value[280] of Indigenous art. Preston advocated that the decorative elements should be used in the home, cafes and theatre and its simplifications used for landscape and figure painting. By the 1940s her visits to remote indigenous communities had deepened her awareness of both the complexity and diversity of Indigenous cultures, and she again urged the study and use of Indigenous art in forming the basis of a national art, that reflected the soul of the vast and ancient continent of Australia. For a time the influence of Indigenous art was apparent in her work – Indigenous motifs and symbols, as well as dried, burnt colours, derived from bark paintings, became increasingly prominent in her prints. However she didn't try and present her work as an imitation of Indigenous art. Her titles from this period frequently acknowledged her sources, and reveal the extent to which she sought to combine traditional Aboriginal motifs and themes she had been exploring.

Despite the fact that Indigenous art had its advocates, such as Baldwin Spencer and Margaret Preston, it remained neglected by the Western art world for quite some time. The touring of the ***Art in Australia 1788-1941*** exhibition across the United States and Canada between 1941 and 1945, was the first time Indigenous art was shown in an artistic context internationally, although the inclusion of three drawings by Tommy McRae and eleven Northern Territory bark paintings was intended to represent the local forerunners to art in the European tradition in Australia. In the catalogue for the exhibition Preston introduced Americans to Aboriginal art. By this time she no longer advocated Indigenous culture as a source of craft, offering instead an opportunity for Australia to develop a national art from that of its 'primitive peoples'. Such ambitions shaped her painting at this time although they sit awkwardly with both the international character of modernism and later post-colonial critiques.

---

[280] In *Art and Australia*, the main art periodical published between 1916 and 1942. it may be surprising that only six articles were written on Aboriginal art – four by Margaret Preston[280], and two by anthropologists[280].

In Australia after World War II, the expectation that indigenisation might help construct a more erudite, modern national identity became more urgent with the growing recognition that Australia could no longer depend on Britain for military and economic protection. This in turn triggered a wider appraisal of pre-existing frameworks. Margaret Preston's references to Aboriginal bark painting in her art, were amongst the manifestations of growing interest in scientific constructions of Aboriginality as the key to forging a more profound, learned and spiritual heritage.

The immediate post-war period saw an expansion of scientific interest in the Indigenous people of remote areas. The growth of anthropological studies and an increasing interest in some quarters of the Australian art world, led to a greater appreciation of Indigenous art. In 1949 the anthropologists Ronald and Catherine Berndt organised an exhibition in the David Jones Art Gallery in Sydney, where Tony Tuckson first encountered Indigenous art.

Several exhibitions of Indigenous Art were organised during the 1950s. This decade saw a marked increase in interest in Indigenous art for its artistic value, rather than as an addendum to ethnographic study. Australia was seen as the last frontier in the collection of so-called 'primitive art' and a succession of collectors visited Indigenous communities in Arnhem Land. It was probably only a matter of time before the art galleries in Australia started to form collections initially through the receipt of significant gifts, rather than the active pursuit of items. In 1956 each State Gallery received from the Commonwealth Government 24 paintings, each on bark or card, which had been collected by the American-Australian Scientific expedition to Arnhem Land in 1948.

The anthropologist, T.G.H. Strehlow was optimistic about the emergence of a contemporary Indigenous art movement at Hermannsburg associated with the Arrernte artist Albert Namatjira - a movement first surveyed by Rex Battarbee in ***'Modern Australian Aboriginal Art'***[281] in 1951, by which time he had assumed the role of administrator of the Aranda Arts Council, effectively becoming the official dealer of the Hermannsburg school. Battarbee applied the term 'modern' to

[281] *Modern Australian Aboriginal Art* was published by Angus & Robertson, Sydney 1951

this Indigenous art that had adapted conventions from European watercolour painting. These artists depicted their environment in a visual representational way, quite opposite to their traditional linear symbolic style. Namatjira, the first Aranda man to paint in watercolours, gained greater recognition than the others because, to Western eyes, his work seemed the least Indigenous. Whilst Namatjira was the first indigenous artist to hold a one-man exhibition a group of 'native artists' were reported in 1946 to be already making a living from their art.[282] Strehlow, in his '***Forward***[283]', whilst acknowledging the sacred or secret meanings of Indigenous abstraction and its inextricable links with performance and comparing elements to those in other non-Western cultures, advocated the 'modern Aranda 'art as a source of cultural revival and a powerful argument against social Darwinism, a view he shared with other anthropologists,

Several exhibitions of Indigenous art were staged in the 1950s. Ronald and Catherine Berndt's ***'The Australian Aboriginal Art: Arnhem Land Paintings on Bark and Carved Human Figures'*** exhibition at the Art Gallery of Western Australia in 1957 was significant in that it was the first to identify individual artists and stylistic traditions. It included works from both Western and Eastern Arnhem Land. In 1945-46 the ethnologist Charles Mountford toured America as a lecturer with the Commonwealth Department of Information bringing Indigenous art to the attention of an international audience, and in 1957-58 he organised an exhibition of bark paintings which toured Europe. In 1956 the collection of items gathered during an exhibition[284] led by Mountford was distributed to the six state galleries, Canberra's Institute of Anatomy (now the National Museum of Australia) and selected institutions in Washington.

Tony Tuckson, as Deputy Director of the Art Gallery of New South Wales at the time began to actively pursue the acquisition of contemporary Indigenous art in the late 1950s, providing the impetus for the Gallery to build one of Australia's most important Indigenous art collections. In

---

[282] *Report on the Administration of the Northern Territory for the year ending 30th June, 1946* (Department of Native Affairs)

[283] Strehlow, T.G.H.), '*Foreword*' to Rex Battarbee's *Modern Australian Aboriginal Art*, (1951) *in* Stephen, McNamara, and Goad (Eds) *Modernism in Australia, Documents on Art, Design and Architecture 1917-1967*, 2006, pp.665ff

[284] This was a nine month expedition sponsored by the National Geographic Society and the Smithsonian Institute in partnership with the Commonwealth of Australia. The expedition travelled to the Arnhem Land communities of Yirrkala, Millinimbi and Gunbalanya (Oenpelli), as well as Groote Eylandt, undertaking research and collecting 275 paintings, 171 o bark and 104 on paper, along with a number of carved and painted objects.

1958 and 1959 Tuckson visited Arnhem Land with the Sydney physician and collector, Stuart Scougall, who donated his large 1958/59 collections of major works from the Tiwi artists of Melville and Bathurst Islands and the Yolngu artists of Yirrkala in north-east Arnhem land.[285]. It is often said that Indigenous art first entered an Australian gallery at this point. While this is an oversimplified account, nevertheless this gift remains a significant and perhaps, in hindsight, a transforming event. At this stage there was still media debate about whether Indigenous art should be shown in an art gallery, but the acquisition of the collection can be interpreted as shattering the anthropological paradigm, and broadening the general public's appreciation of the work as art rather than part of an ethnological collection.

'White settler' artists continued the experiments of Margaret Preston combining motifs with European modernist elements. Debate continues around the degree to which this was an attempt to genuinely engage with indigenous art or just an appropriation or theft of elements. A number of significant artists were engaging directly with indigenous artists in the 1950s and 1960s. Two other distinguished painters, Ian Fairweather and John Olson, have had their works compared by some post-war critics, to those of Indigenous artists. The work of Russell Drysdale and Sali Herman also showed some influences. "Drysdale's sympathetic portrayals of Aborigines played a role in giving a human face to those people of the desert who had been effectively ignored by white society up until that time."[286] Some argue that the work of the Boyds during the 1950s and 1960s, were in fact making powerful statements about the desperate plight of Aborigines at the time. It is interesting to note that contemporary histories or art in Australia, for example by Robert Hughes, totally excluded indigenous art and its impact.

Whilst Indigenous works were excluded from the canonical '***Recent Australian Painting***' exhibition, held in the Whitechapel Art Gallery in London in 1961, the state galleries focussed further attention on Australian Indigenous art when they organised a major exhibition, '***Australian Aboriginal Art***', mainly of bark paintings, which toured through the six state capitals during 1960 and 1961, signalling the start of the wider acceptance of Indigenous art through the opportunity for the general public and artists to see it as art, and not as part of an

[285] Scougall was an orthopaedic surgeon with a passion for Aboriginal art

[286] MacDonald, John *'Haunting images of a vast dry land: The work of a great Australian artist with an apocalyptic vision is as relevant today as it was more than 60 years ago' The Sydney Morning Herald,* 13-14 February 2010

ethnological collection. These items, simply by being exhibited in an art gallery could be contemplated in some form of isolation, compared to other works of their periods and other cultures. Tuckson curated this exhibition and had invited Ronald Berndt to edit a lavishly illustrated book, ***Australian Aboriginal Art***[287], based on 1960 exhibition and containing essays from leading anthropologists. Tuckson's own contribution to the book shifted the emphasis from anthropology to art, but unfortunately relations became acrimonious after Berndt accused Tuckson of over-emphasising individualism and a 'universal language, and not taking 'cultural background' seriously into account.

The debate [288] between Ronald Berndt and Tuckson continued over how Indigenous art should be exhibited appreciated and understood. Tuckson certainly believed that there is something universal about the character of art objects that makes it possible to evaluate them in isolation from their cultural and social background. He argued that there is "a unifying quality over and above the different styles, not only in their visual sense of balance and proportion but also in the underlying spirit of their imagery which makes it possible for us to appreciate visual art without any knowledge of their specific meaning and original purpose."[289]. Tuckson continued to argue that a work, removed from its setting, its context, away from the community to a place where these associations, its purpose and meanings are not known, other values can be found for appreciation of the interpretation of the subject through the artist's skill and technique developing a visual unity.

From Tuckson's point of view, the involvement of the anthropologist Baldwin Spencer with Indigenous art may have symbolised the very problem he was trying to address. While he was able to see the aesthetic dimensions and universal characteristics of Aboriginal art, the paintings in his charge remained in the National Museum as part of a comprehensive ethnographic collection, rather than moving to the National Gallery of Victoria. The art was thus lost amongst the ethnography, and not seen as art because of where it was housed and how it was exhibited.

---

[287] Published by Collier-Macmillan, London, and Ure Smith, Sydney in 1964

[288] Evident in Berndt's edited book *'Australian Aboriginal Art'* which was published to accompany an exhibition of the same name curated by Tuckson

[289] Tuckson, Tony *'Aboriginal Art and the Western World'* (1964) *in* Stephen, McNamara, and Goad (Eds) *Modernism in Australia, Documents on Art, Design and Architecture 1917-1967*, 2006, pp744ff

Berndt asserted that there is a need to go further...beyond the decorative qualities and our own cultural frontiers to appreciate something of the cultural context, the function or purpose of the object, or even the identity of the artist. Otherwise, appreciation is only partial, and is biased towards the values of the viewing culture. Berndt argued that, although it is possible to appreciate works purely on the basis of form, this appreciation is only partial, and is biased towards the values of the viewing culture. A number of writers stressed that without an understanding of the purpose and meaning of the symbols in 'primitive art' the 'European' observer is only left to appreciate, as an intellectual exercise, the pleasing aesthetics without meaning or value. An Indigenous artist's attitude is related to his totemic, spiritual life and his conception of the surrounding world. Indigenous artists see the world differently. The art is therefore subjective, symbolic, based on knowledge rather than visual appearances. The artist's intention is not representation based on a classic norm. Many observers have therefore misunderstood and underrated the main characteristics, the regional differences and changing styles over time.

Howard Morphy later contended that whilst viewers can obviously appreciate any work of art through the lens of their own culture's aesthetics, they must realise that they are unable to fully experience the work as a member of the producing culture would. Morphy therefore challenges the failure to provide the background information needed to interpret the object in the context of the source culture on moral ground and the grounds that it impoverishes the interpretation.[290]

Tuckson curated a subsequent tour of Scougall's own collection to Tokyo, Auckland, San Francisco, Montreal and Tehran. The acquisition was a significant, if not transforming event. Tuckson, by arguing that art objects retain certain 'universal' characteristics that allow them to be evaluated independently of their cultural and social background, adopted a position opposing the anthropologists' view[291], laid a foundation for the collection to be acquired for aesthetic rather than anthropological reasons. In 1984, John Mundine, art advisor from Ramingining, was appointed the Art Gallery of New South Wales' Curator-in-the field. This was the first

[290] Morphy, Howard, *'Seeing Aboriginal Art in the Gallery' Humanities Research – Museums of the Future Part I,* Volume VII, Number 1, 2001, *p.6*

[291] A crude oversimplification of the anthropologist's view is that it basically argued for the radical dissimilarity of all things traditionally Aboriginal to all things traditionally European.

appointment of an Aboriginal person to a curatorial position in an Aboriginal art department of a public gallery. By the time the Art Gallery of NSW opened the Yiribana Gallery in late 1994 the collection was at the forefront in the acquisition and promotion of art from a range of communities. The Gallery had also devoted the largest permanent space to display this art and culture. It has also been a policy of the National Gallery of Australia right from the beginning to collect Indigenous art.

Indigenous art wasn't widely sought after until the late 1980s, post-dating modernism. From the early 1990s onwards the Art Gallery of New South Wales undertook an active acquisitions policy, coupled with a series of exhibitions and public programmes that reflects the diversity of contemporary Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art practice in contemporary Australia. The Gallery's ***'My Story, My Country'*** exhibition in 1992 looked at the vital connection between the artists, their stories and their homelands expressed through a variety of media. The exhibition sought to represent the diversity and richness of Indigenous art from the 1940s, which saw the emergence of the mission-influenced Hermannsburg School, to the contemporary work of urban artists like Judy Watson, Fiona Foley and Gordon Bennett, who are young enough not to have been directly involved in the great ideological battles that took place in the art of the 1960s and 1970s, but who responded to the growing awareness of Aboriginal issues generated by the boom in Western Desert Art and events such as the Mabo case and the subsequent understanding of 'native title'.

The movement towards incorporating a spiritualised Aboriginality to sanctify the postcolonial nation was fostered by the growing international and tourist demand for Aboriginal desert art. Work in acrylics by desert artists emerged in the early 1970s in Papunya. Northern rock art too rapidly drew attention, especially when it was located in rugged areas. The movement allowed Aboriginal people to draw global attention to their enduring knowledge of and relationship with their country. Nevertheless, most of these remote artists avoided the issue of pre-invasion and present-day experience, in contrast to urban people like Gordon Bennett or Trevor Nickolls who were accused of 'angry sloganeering'. In other ways as well, the Western response remained colonialist. Within a decade, northern output had become individualised and commodified as signature art and was attracting sensational prices. It had also become a major export industry.

Distinctions arose between 'traditional', sometimes thought of as more 'authentic', and 'urban' artists. These decades also saw the emergence of urban and rural artists, whose links to their cultural heritages have been, to varying degrees, severed by the impact colonialism and decades of official policies of family separation and assimilation. Issues related to dispossession, broken families, racism and an intensification of the sense of cultural identity provided strong motivation, and these themes are all part of the repertoire of artists. Some of their precursors of these artists[292] emerged in the south-eastern corner of the continent where the first impact of European colonisation was keenly felt. With few exceptions, the work of Indigenous artists living in urban and rural areas who continued to utilise traditional techniques was regarded as a manifestation of a degenerate tradition, or as kitsch. Despite this, the persistence of art practices among urban and rural people has proved significant in the development of art in the late twentieth century, as Indigenous practitioners have tried to "sidestep the twin straightjackets of exoticism and commercialisation into which so much of Western scholarship and gallery practice is pinning their works."[293] Indigenous people living outside traditional environments have played a significant role in the renaissance of Indigenous culture in the second half of the twentieth century.

During this period many Indigenous people in south-eastern Australia began to develop as artists whilst asserting their Aboriginality. As is evident in other former settler colonies, like New Zealand, South Africa, and Canada, there is a lively and growing number of indigenous artists, mainly trained in city-based art schools like their white contemporaries, and who have identified with institutional post-colonialism. These include Gordon Bennett, Tracey Moffat and Gordon Hookey. Questions arose about their relationship to other Indigenous artists and the relationship between Indigenous art and other contemporary Australian art. The ambitions of Indigenous and migrant voices, for example, are very different. Non-indigenous artists, like Tim Johnson and Imants Tillers, borrowed Indigenous motifs for their own work, and Tim Johnson participated with Indigenous artists in the co-production of paintings. Such activities triggered debate about

[292] William Barak and Tommy McRae, the best known of several artists working at the time, produced drawings commissioned from them by European settlers. The fact that Aboriginal artists such as Barak and McRae were commissioned by and sold their work to Europeans is significant in the history of relations between the two groups.
[293] Webb, Jen *'Negotiating Alterity: Indigenous and 'Outsider' art', Third Text,* Volume 16, Issue 2, 2002

the relationship between 'Australian' and 'Indigenous', whether work recognised as 'avant-garde' can no longer be classified as 'indigenous' art, and the status of work that is visually similar but completed by either indigenous of non-indigenous contemporary artists.

Think "Indigenous art' and, for many, a narrow image comes to mind – of "wizened men and women toiling in the desert on abstract dot paintings and cross hatchings on bark"[294]. Indigenous society today encompasses people with vastly different historical experiences, especially since European settlement. It is neither homogenous nor static, responding to both internal and external influences. Contemporary Indigenous artists "draw upon a wealth of non-Indigenous references to create an explicit Indigenous identification reflecting their manifold experiences."[295] Their experiences and concerns vary and inevitably emerge in their work. In 1999 ***'Another Country: Works on paper and photography'***, also at the Art Gallery of New South Wales (Yirbana Gallery) in 1999, also makes no clichéd distinction between the 'traditional' and 'contemporary', embracing the work of both young experimental artists and elders of rural communities in "an unequivocal demonstration of a vibrant, dynamic culture, expressed in works on paper and photography"[296]. Tess Allas, associate lecturer at the University of NSW's College of Fine Arts, has spent three years helping to create Storylines – an online database about indigenous artists from everywhere but the Top End and the desert, and wrote some 600 artist biographies[297]. In her work she was trying to draw attention to the work done by artists other than those in the 'remote' areas – those traditional regarded as 'authentic' – and to 'reposition' city-based indigenous artists and contemporary-art communities.

The increasingly cosmopolitan Australian society and the increasing engagement with international trends, highlights the complex and heavily nuanced concepts of culture and the role of art in public life. While the art of these contemporary artists proclaiming their Indigenous credentials, and often acting as a medium for cultural renewal, tends to operates beyond the classical idioms, drawing inspiration from Indigenous practices as well as European and other

---

[294] Samantha Sellinger-Morris '*The best of both worlds: Aboriginal art is as reflective of contemporary as it is of the past'* ***The Sydney Morning Herald*** *(*Weekend Edition) 9-10 October 2010

[295] Radford, Ron, *'Director's Forward'* , *Culture Warriors – National Indigenous Art Triennial 07* (National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, 2007

[296] White, Judith, *'The country within', Look Magazine*, Art Gallery of New South Wales, September 2009

[297] With the help of assistant Laura Fisher

visual languages and techniques. This art reflects a unique perspective born of a distinctive experience. These artists have often been relegated to the periphery of artistic practice in Australia. In the same way in the 1950s, just as it had begun to gain limited recognition, the authenticity of Indigenous art had been seen as threatened with contamination by contact, trade and European influence. Generally Australian society perceived traditional forms alone as the authentic expression of Aboriginality. Authenticity was allied with isolation. Indigenous works, especially those made in the context of a traditional economy are frequently not subject to Western aesthetic definitions – that is, they are not made primarily to make an aesthetic statement but rather, for example, to describe cultural practices, and to map or explain the relationship of the people to the land. "Authenticity was equated with tradition, and the value of an object lay in its expression of a time and culture gone by rather than its relevance as a reflection of contemporary circumstances."[298] Consequently those artists who did not fit into any preconceived categories were denied the opportunities open to other Australian artists and their work was largely ignored. The issue of authenticity remains contentious both within and outside Indigenous communities. It has been argued that the key issue today in indigenous arts is the need to protect the integrity of the art itself which is bound up with Indigenous identity and the story that led to its creation.[299] In the paradigmatic shift from ethnographic artefact to art object, there needs to be at least some appreciation of Indigenous works according to their own aesthetic criteria.

The political and social breakthroughs of the 1960s and 1970s laid the groundwork for the official recognition of Indigenous culture. With the increased political freedoms emerging from 1967 onwards, came the gradual acknowledgement of some Indigenous rights to the land and the opening-up of social and economic opportunities. As people expressed pride in their culture, and many resumed a fuller traditional and ceremonial life, art practise began to flourish. It was not until 1976, however, that land rights legislation in any form was enacted in the Northern Territory.

---

[298] Caruana, Wally, *Aboriginal Art*, 2003 , p. 211

[299] O'Brien, Geraldine *'Australia's Indigenous Art: Success breeds Exploitation – and now ideas to improve the artists' lives' Look Magazine,* Art Gallery of New South Wales, July 2006

'Contemporary Indigenous art' emerged as a category in Australia during the 1970s and 1980s. This included art from all regions of Australia, "with the proviso that the works were in continuity with Aboriginal traditions, and thus part of a trajectory that stretched backwards to the pre-colonial era."[300] The category partly came into being as an assertion by Indigenous artists of the relevance of their art in the contemporary Australian context. It influences non-indigenous Australian art and in turn was influenced by the post-colonial context of its production. It represented dynamic and diverse traditions, and it was often avowedly political art. Whilst rescuing some indigenous art from marginalisation, the 1970s saw a general non-recognition of south-east Australia.

In the 1970s Thancoupie and the painter Trevor Nikolls had been pioneers in establishing a place on the Australian scene for artists working outside the classical Indigenous traditions. Their achievements opened the way for others to follow. Nikolls was one of thirty artists represented in ***Koori Art '84*** at the Contemporary Art Space in Sydney, a watershed exhibition for urban Indigenous art and artists. The show brought together several artists who had been working in isolation but shared similar aspirations, articulating the concerns of Indigenous artists working outside the traditional Indigenous framework, whilst also included non-urban artists using European media and techniques..

Urban Aboriginal culture has largely been seen as illegitimate, inauthentic and non-traditional – as the product of assimilation rather than the culmination of a dynamic bi-culturalism. This lack of acknowledgement led to the formation of one of Australia's longest running artists' cooperatives – the Boomalli Aboriginal Artist Cooperative[301] – founded in 1987 and based in Redfern/Chippendale, to provide studio and exhibition spaces, and a platform for the promotion of this long overlooked urban visual culture through the work of its members. In doing so,

---

[300] Morphy, Howard *'Seeing Aboriginal Art in the Gallery' Humanities Research – Museums of the Future Part I,* Volume VII, Number 1, 2001, p.12

[301] The ten founding members included Brenda L.Croft, Bronwyn Bancroft, Euphemia Bostock, Fiona Foley, Fernanda Martins, Arone Raymond Meeks, Avril Quaill, Jeffery Samuels, Michael Riley and Tracey Moffatt. This pioneering group had largely met whilst undertaking tertiary art education or exhibiting together in projects like *'Contemporary Aboriginal art'* (1983), *Koori art'84, NADOC'86 Exhibition of Aboriginal and Islander Photographers* and *Urban Kooris* (1986). It originally worked towards providing studio space and peer support, mounting its inaugural exhibition, *Boomalli au-go-go*, in 1997. Critical to establishment was funding from the then Aboriginal art board of the Australia Council.

Boomalli directly confronted the lack of representation of urban Aboriginal art within the wider art scene and the stereotyped ideas of Aboriginal culture based on ignorance and historically based preconceptions. Most urban Indigenous artists from around Australia have been touched or in some way linked to the Co-operative and become part of its growing community. Institutional acceptance of the work of Koori artists began. The Art Gallery of New South Wales acquired Jeffrey Samuel's ***This changing continent of Australia*** from ***Koori '84***. Between 1992 and 1995, the Co-operative entered it most progressive years under the leadership of Brenda L. Croft and Hetti Perkins. The Co-operative remains a pivotal institution in the development and promotion of urban Aboriginal culture, acting as a gallery and a vehicle of social reform, challenging preconceptions and stereotypes held by the mainstream community.

Caruana asserts that the "quest for equality and justice within Australian society as a whole has been a resonant and recurring theme in the work of the first wave of urban Indigenous artists."[302] Urban Aboriginal culture[303] has been problematic in its definition. 'The pioneering efforts of the first group of urban artists in the 1970s and 1980s created opportunities for urban and rurally based artists and a wider interest in their work. This first generation of so-called 'urban Aboriginal artists' were city dwellers whose lives had been spent working and studying within the wider community. These artists wanted to reclaim and assert their Aboriginal identity and to use their work to address political injustice. Their work found rapid acceptance with the public institutions attracted to the idea of 'a group of young, articulate, politically aware artists in touch with the latest developments in the contemporary arena".[304]

The photographs of Mervyn Bishop, Tracey Moffat, Brenda L. Croft and Michael Riley present a powerful alternative to the negative stereotypes of Indigenous people seen in popular imagery and in the daily press. Bishop's famous 1975 photograph, ***Prime Minister Gough Whitlam***

---

[302] Caruana, Wally *Aboriginal Art,* 2003, p. 211

[303] Sydney has become the axis for the new movement coined 'urban Aboriginal culture', not only as the point of origin due to the initial dispossession of white settlement but also as the destination for waves of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander migrations. Those coming to Sydney, often in pursuit of a better life, have added to the developing urban cultural milieu. Relocating from one's homeland generates a new sense of identity and an assertion of belonging within the adopted community, leading in this context to the formation of many organizations that have championed Indigenous rights throughout the country, and to a particular political edge or force.

[304] MacDonald, John *'Preaching to the converted: An indigenous artist uses simple, striking images and a macabre sense of humour to make her political points' The Sydney Morning Herald,* 9-10 January 2010. Sydney's Boomali Aboriginal Artists' Cooperative, founded in 1987, was vital to this group.

***pours soil into hand of traditional owner Vincent Linglari***, celebrates the success of the Guringji people in gaining back their traditional lands in what had become a cause célèbre of the land rights movement. Bishop inspires an emerging generation of Indigenous photographers. Not all the work of urban artists is so politically and socially charged. These artists offer a variety of perspectives on a world with which much of its audience is generally unfamiliar. At the same time, by implicitly questioning and challenging contemporary attitudes, they articulate the concerns and aspirations of Indigenous people in modern Australia.

Wiradjuru/Kamilaroi artist Michael Riley, one of the Boomalli Cooperative artist, was a seminal force in the contemporary Indigenous visual arts movement throughout the 1990s. His film and video work challenged perceptions of Indigenous experience, especially the experience of disenfranchised communities in rural and remote eastern Australia, which he brought to the forefront of international contemporary art. Riley's work was included in the 2003 Instanbul Biennal, and he was one of the eight Indigenous artists selected to be represented at the Musée du Quai Branly. His work draws on both European and North American traditions, as well as his Indigenous heritage, and throughout his work there is a sense of representing the diverse aspects of contemporary Indigenous life accurately through the media of film and photography, breaking away from negative or militant stereotypes. Another of the Boomalli artists, Tracey Moffatt, emerged as a world-renowned photographer and film-maker

By the 1980s Indigenous art moved from the non-art to the art category at least partly through the process of commercialisation. Because so many forms of Indigenous art are the temporary product of performance[305] or sacred objects, in making works that could be sold Indigenous craftspeople clearly produced artefacts whose form was influenced by interaction with the market, and production for outside consumption. Those who sought to develop foundational collections in new media, like the transfer of central Australian designs to acrylic paintings on canvas, were often, without realising it, vital to the incorporation of Indigenous l cultural production within the new market economy. Indigenous people themselves used art as a means of articulating the value of their way of life, as well as a means of generating income in the post-colonial context.

[305] Such as body paintings, sand sculptures and ground drawings, string constructions and fragile head-dresses.

The 1981 ***'Aboriginal Australia'*** exhibition which travelled to the State art galleries in Victoria, Western Australia and Queensland was a major expression of the new, inclusive category of 'contemporary Australian art'. It included bark paintings, Western Desert acrylic paintings[306] and sculptures from Cape York Peninsula and Melville and Bathurst Islands, decorated artefacts from all over Australia, as well as watercolours by Namatjira, paintings by William Barak, and drawings by Tommy McRae.

The National Gallery of Australia opened to the public in 1982 during this period of burgeoning interest in Indigenous art. Other public institutions already held earlier major collections. The National Gallery therefore formulated its policy 'to document and represent the continuing and evolving traditions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art in light of the dynamic nature of indigenous artistic practice reflecting a diversity of experience.'[307] Notwithstanding the representative nature of the collection, there are areas of specialisation. The important ***'Aboriginal Art at the ANG'*** exhibition in 1988 was the final flourish of the National Gallery's Bicentennial brush, revealed through works mainly from its own collection, the continuing and evolving traditions of contemporary Indigenous art.

The South Australian Museum's exhibition in 1986 ***'Art and Land'*** provides an example of the discourse over Indigenous art as art. It also illustrates just how challenging Tuckson's action had been when he installed Indigenous art for the first time in the Art Gallery of New South Wales. ***'Art and Land'*** was an exhibition of toas[308] from the Lake Eyre region of Central Australia. The art historian Donald Brooke argued that the way they were displayed was in itself a form of appropriation, since it contradicted the intention of the producers. The acceptance of non-European art works into a Western gallery may in fact challenge the Western definition of art, asserting a different kind of art history that threatens to unsettle pre-existing values.

---

[306] Western Desert paintings were a newly developed art form employing European materials, and they apparently changed rapidly over time; these paintings became unproblematically avant-garde.

[307] Caruana, W/ & Lendon , N.(editors) *The Paintings of the Wagilag Sisters Story 1937-1997*, 1997, p.17

[308] Toas were direction signs that marked where people had gone but they were also engaging and diverse minimalist sculptural forms. The anthropologist Peter Sutton and historian Philip Jones exhibited the objects as art rather than ethnography. In the accompanying book and the surrounding debate the exhibition, more contextual information on toas than had been previously available.

The second wave of Indigenous contemporary artists emerged in the late 1980s, and included Robert Campbell junior, whose stated ambition as a painter had been to record Indigenous history for his family. By 1987 his work was receiving wider scrutiny. Campbell depicted episodes of Australian history from the Indigenous perspective, and also documented significant moments in Indigenous history.

In 1988 when many Australians celebrated two hundred years of European settlement, the Indigenous community developed a varied response. Above all, Indigenous people across the country portrayed the resilience of their culture in the face of great odds. Many of the themes in Australian art in the late 20th century come together in ***The Aboriginal Memorial*** (1988) – a symbolically rich work of public sculpture conceived a small group of artists in Ramingining in Central Arnhem Land, for example, decided to mark the Bicentennial with a memorial to Indigenous people – past, present and future. The memorial took the form of two hundred hollow log coffins or ***dupun***, ranging from three to ten feet in height, each painted with clan motifs belonging to the 43 artists who painted them, and arranged around a central space representing the Blyth River in central Arnhem Land. Each one marks a year of settlement, commemorating the thousands of Indigenous people who had perished in the course of European settlement, and for whom it had not been possible to conduct appropriate mortuary rites. The ***Memorial's*** relevance, however, is not confined to the past. It was designed to be both a celebration of the continuation of Aboriginal culture in Arnhem Land. It speaks of life, continuity and a new beginning. It is also a powerful political statement and an extraordinary display of the richness of the visual languages of Aboriginal Australia. The ***Memorial*** reflects traditional ceremonial and artistic activities which continue to be practised across the country, carrying the spiritual forces of the ancestral beings from one generation to the next. It also signifies art's important role in expressing Indigenous values and perspectives to a world which, in many cases, continues to be hostile to Indigenous aspirations. Whilst the ***Memorial*** .represents a deep relationship to a particular topography, it was intended to be in a public space and initially appeared in the Biennale of Sydney. It was subsequently installed in the National Gallery of Australia where it could be permanently displayed and preserved for future generations of Australians. Once the new extensions to the National Gallery are completed, the ***Memorial*** will be a particular feature.

It is significant that the ***Memorial*** is now housed in a public museum, and in the national capital, inhabited by public memorials and symbolic of nationhood.

In the initial planning for the Bicentennial survey exhibition of Australian art, ***'Creating Australia',*** it was assumed that separate exhibitions of Indigenous art would be preferred by Indigenous people. Only at a very late stage was it realised that the exclusion of Indigenous art from such a broad survey would be a continuation of 'art-as-ethnography' attitudes[309]. This exhibition organised by the Art Gallery of South Australia to tour each of the State Galleries during 1988-89, attempted to bring together the high points of Australian art, focusing on painting. It was perhaps inevitable that a project of these dimensions should attract negative criticism, especially in terms of the choice of works and the weight given to individual sections. Works by only four Indigenous artists, all Western Australian – Jimmy Pike, Charles Numblar[310], Rover Thomas, and the artist who carved the West Australian Shield – were included. Perhaps the one great strength of the show is that Indigenous art, both traditional and contemporary, is integrated into the continuity of Australian art.

In 1989 the National Gallery of Australia held its first major survey exhibition ***'Aboriginal Art: the Continuing Tradition'*** which included over 500 works displayed along thematic and stylistic lines. The gallery then planned a series of focused exhibitions, including ***'Flash Pictures'*** which investigated the aesthetics of painting. In 1993 and in 1994 the gallery mounted two monographic exhibitions for indigenous artists – ***'The Art of George Milpurrurru'*** and ***'Roads Cross: The Paintings of Rover Thomas'***. The gallery has also held exhibitions of historical Indigenous work, including the 1994 exhibition of ***'Aboriginal Artists of the Nineteenth Century'*** and the 1996 exhibition ***'Papunya Pictures: the First Ten Years'***.

The Australian Museum in Sydney opened a new permanent gallery, ***'Indigenous Australians'*** in 1997. The exhibition themes – spirituality, cultural heritage, family, land, health, social justice and the future – were chosen in consultation with I indigenous Australians and followed extensive market research with the museum's visitors. The exhibition tackles issues that were

---

[309] Thomas, Daniel *'Preface' Creating Australia: 200 Years of Art 1788-1988*, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, 1988

[310] The craftsman of the pearl shell pendant of the 1930s.

rarely openly discussed in much of Australia, overtly representing the richness and sophistication or Indigenous culture and heritage, whilst portraying largely unknown histories through images and artefacts alongside factual and statistical information. The exhibition's intention was to waive the curatorial voice in favour of the voices of indigenous Australians. Audience research was undertaken to see what people had learnt.

With all eyes focused on Australia for the 2000 Olympics in Sydney, The National Gallery in Canberra celebrated indigenous culture with the return of the exhibition :***'World of Dreamings: Aboriginal art in Modern Worlds'***, which included the work of eight contemporary Indigenous artists, as well as the collaborative work, the ***Aboriginal memorial***. This exhibition toured to Lausanne, Hanover and the State Hermitage Museum in St Petersburg, attracting large crowds.

Indigenous art also finds some representation in regional galleries. According to Jane Stewart from the Devonport Regional Gallery there are a number of active artists and craftspeople identifying themselves as Aboriginal – as a rule they are more willing to be included in exhibitions that also show work by non-indigenous artists.

## 2. CASE STUDIES

The three main traditions are watercolours from Hermannsburg, acrylic paintings from the Western Dessert and Arnhem Land barks. There is however a great deal more, covering a broad range of subjects, styles and media, including traditional techniques.

### 2.1 Albert Namatjira

The first Indigenous art work acquired by an Australian art gallery[311], as opposed to an ethnographic museum, was ***Illum-Baura (Haast's Bluff)*** a watercolour from Albert Namatjira's from the artist's first solo exhibition in Adelaide (November 1939). It was acquired by the Art Gallery of South Australia. The watercolour techniques introduced by Batterbee to the Hermannsburg community in the 1930s were taken up by Albert Namatjira, who became

[311] The Art Gallery of Western Australia acquired its first indigenous work in 1946 – ***Ullambaura Haasts Bluff*** 1946 a watercolour from Namatjira's second solo exhibition. In 1946 the National Gallery of Victoria acquired two watercolours by another Hermannsburg artist, Edwin Pateroultja (1918-1986) and in 1948 the Art gallery of NSW obtained its first indigenous work – Amulda Gorge 1947, also by Pateroultja – emphasising the national significance of the Hermannsburg watercolourist school.

Australia's first popularly known Indigenous artist. Namatjira held his first solo exhibition at the Royal South Australian Society of Arts in Adelaide in 1938. All forty-one of Namatjira's watercolours in the March 1946 exhibition, again at the Royal South Australia Society of Arts Gallery in Adelaide, were sold at catalogue prices. The attendance at this one-man exhibition averaged over 1.000 persons daily. His financial interests were at this time 'managed' by an 'Advisory Council'.

Despite his fame and popular acclaim, he died in August 1959 disillusioned and disappointed by white society. By this time, Namatjira's 'classic' images of the 1950's, the time of the rise of modernism, were seen as 'too picturesque and formulaic' and not true to what Indigenous art should be – not sufficiently 'authentic' - but these formed only one phase of his work, and the analysis of the time was superficial.. Despite his success and popular appeal[312], Namatjira's achievements were dismissed as derivative by art commentators until the recent reassessment of his work, revealing a far more complex approach to the sites he portrayed.

It wasn't until the 1984 monographic exhibition [313]of his work that his vision and that or his peers was revisited and given due reconsideration in the light of its significance in Indigenous visual arts and culture. Despite the fact that this Alice Springs-based exhibition did not tour outside Central Australia, the small catalogue[314] and the more substantial publication that emerged from it, did much to reposition Namatjira in the Australian art history canon. This was the first public exhibition to demonstrate his impact on other Indigenous artists,

It is still difficult for anyone to obtain a comprehensive picture of Namatjira's vision by viewing works held in Australian public art museums outside Central Australia. Critical response to Namatjira's work has been constrained by limited exposure to the range of his work. Since 1992 the Aruluen Centre in Alice Springs has housed the only permanent display of his works in an Australian public art gallery. ***The Heritage of Namatjira***, which toured nationally in 1992/93,

[312] The sale of his work to the general public was extraordinarily successful through the many 'sell-out' commercial exhibitions held during his lifetime. A vast number of his major works are still in private collections.

[313] This marked the 25th anniversary of his death. This retrospective survey showing 54 paintings was rhe inaugural exhibition opening the Araluen Centre for Arts and Entertainment, Alice Springs. It had been the only substantial representation of Namatjira's work in a public art museum prior to the ***Seeing the Centre*** exhibition in 2002.

[314] The exhibition catalogue Albert Namatjira was prepared by Mona Byrnes, Araluen Arts and Cultural Trust, Araluen Arts Centre, Alice Springs (20 June to 14 July 1984)

contained only nineteen of his works. Outside the Northern Territory, the only public institutions to possess representative ranges of Namatjira's works are the National Gallery of Australia, the Queensland Art Gallery and the Flinders University Art Museum in South Australia. However each of their holdings is small. The 'art establishment has only really appreciated Namatjira's significance since the 1980s, and works by Namatjira were not collected by the Art Gallery of New South Wales until around 1986.

With the ***Seeing the Centre: The Art of Albert Namatjira 1902-1959*** exhibition in 2002, the National Gallery of Australia brought together the first comprehensive exhibition of his work for Australian audiences. It marked the centenary of Namatjira's birth, toured to The Aruluen Centre for Arts and Entertainment in Alice Springs, National Gallery of Australia, the Gallery of South Australia, National Gallery of Victoria and the Queensland Art Gallery.

Brenda Croft argues that his gift to both Indigenous and non-Indigenous artists in the years since his death "resides in the strength of Namatjira's work – his courage, his sorrow, his spirituality – in these days of 'reconciliation', but most of all, in the spiritual heritage of every Indigenous person in Australia today."[315]

### 2.2 The Western Desert Art Movement

Namatjira's influence was widespread and he had paved the way for the acceptance by non-Indigenous Australians of more recent developments in Indigenous art, particularly in the Western Desert where the Papunya School of painting emerged to become one of the most significant movements in modern Australian art. The movement developed amongst elderly men and women in the small settlement of Papunya south west of Alice Springs. They had been raised and initiated in tribal traditions which they sought to preserve and enrich in their acrylic paintings – clearly a non-tradition medium. In 1970 the tribal men eventually worked together as a group crystallising beliefs about the landscape and the world in which Indigenous people lived Their art is focused on the 'Dreaming' rather than modernist art principles.

[315] Croft, Brenda L. *'Albert's Gift'* ***Artonview*** (National Gallery of Australia) Issue No.31 Spring 2002

The Papunya painting movement gave forceful expression to the connectedness of these people to land, and in providing a means of cultural expression to them. Papunya created a template which was replicates throughout a number of central and western desert communities in subsequent decades.

Geoffrey Bardon, an art teacher arrived in Papunya in 1971, convinced on the one hand of the sense of exile from their homelands, and on the other hand, of the integral role art and the making of art played in their lives. Bardon was the catalyst for change, teaching the children and encouraging local elders, who originally come from a range of backgrounds and language groups[316], but who had come into the settlement after its establishment in 1960, to paint a mural in the traditional mode on the walls of the school[317]. The results had a profound effect on the community giving rise to the Papunya Tula contemporary art movements.

The distinctive style that developed at Papunya resulted in part from Bardon's injunction against non-Indigenous mode of representation. The production during 1971 and 1972 was prolific, and the artists established Papunya Tula Artists Pty Ltd in 1972, and began relationships with a series of art advisers who have continued to market their work. Even though their efforts were initially ignored by the market and the movement experienced difficult times in its first decade, it marked a momentous paradigm shift both within Australian Indigenous art-making and in external perceptions. The transfer of cultural knowledge to younger generations had been disrupted by European settlement – these paintings provided a means of renewal.

Debate was triggered debate around the issue of making a public painting using traditional images embodying the 'Dreamings' of the sites from which the men has originally come. The murals had to be of a nature that could be seen by women and young people, and the subjects had to be acceptable to the diverse tribal and family groups in the community. Demand for painting materials rose rapidly as Bardon encouraged the elder men to transfer ancient ceremonial designs and stories, hitherto drawn in the sand or in natural ochres on their bodies, onto portable surfaces

[316] Most of Papunya's population were Pintupi people, the last of the tribal groups 'to come in' from the desert. But there were also Anmatyerre, Arrernt, Luritja and Walpiri people.
[317] Other murals followed, although after Bardon left in 1972 they were destroyed under regulations intended to keep the school pristine. Nevertheless, the successful completion of the murals encouraged other local artists to paint.

using synthetic paints - works which were destined ultimately to leave the local community. These paintings were iconographically dense, often requiring complex narrative interpretations.

The movement at Papunya[318] has developed through a number of phases, marked by changes in style, technique and type of imagery, evolving from experimental, gestural and potent expressions of Tjukurrpa (ancestral stories) to larger, more ambitious and sophisticated paintings on canvas. Whilst more and more artists became involved, each drawing on the symbols idiosyncratic to their particular language groups, individual artists began to emerge as significant creative forces. In contrast to the austere compositions favoured to Pintupi painters, artists such as the Anmatyerre/Arrernte brothers Clifford Possum Tjapaltjarri and Tim Leura Tjapaltjarri create rich painted surfaces and employ a wide range of the available iconography. They were amongst the pioneering figures who developed a style that represented traditional symbols and meanings using European materials and techniques. Clifford Possum Tjapaltjarri soon became a leader of the Papunya movement. By the late 1970s he was acknowledged as an artist who could readily master the challenge of large-scale canvasses, and was one of the first of these desert artists to be admired by the art world – his work has been included in major surveys of Indigenous art and mixed exhibitions of Indigenous and non-Indigenous art, and had solo exhibitions in London[319] and New York. As Ron Radford, as Director of the Art Gallery of South Australia, pointed out in relation to Clifford Possum's first comprehensive retrospective in 2003, the "inherited dreaming stories, embodied in symmetrical designed within cultural 'maps', hold important and potent meaning for his own people but the uninitiated, equally, can feel their power and appreciate their extraordinary pictorial beauty."[320]

Today, Indigenous artists in the region work in a wide range of media, including those landscape watercolourists continuing to represent their country in Namatjira's style as well as printmakers and the Hermannsburg Potters. For much of the 1970s and 1980s few Australian institutions had wanted to show work from Papunya. Galleries argued that it was ethnological and so should be

---

[318] Dr Vivien Johnson, a leading scholar of Indigenous contemporary art, has compiled a biographical record of every artist in the movement after tracking down the whereabouts or records of 250 artists, tracing each artist's genealogy, including skin clan and language group, as well as the art works they created or were involved in creating, The book (*Lives of the Papunya Tula Artists*) was launched in November 2008 at the Art Gallery of NSW.

[319] ***Institute of Contemporary Art***, London, 1988

[320] Johnson. Vivien, *Clifford Possum, Clifford Possum Tjapaltjarri,*_Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide 2003, p.7

in the museum, while museums complained that they couldn't accommodate what they saw as contemporary art/ Ironically, now everyone wants to show it.

The Western Desert 'dot painting school' for example has received international acclaim. In 1983, the Art Gallery of South Australia, developed a large survey exhibition, ***Recent Australian Painting 1970-1983***, which was the first complete survey of contemporary Australia painting for some years and the first to include Indigenous art, including five Western Desert dot painters. In 1984, the Gallery also staged ***Aboriginal Dreamings from the Western Desert***, the first exhibition of its own small but growing collection, followedby the development of the1988 touring blockbuster ***The Great Australian Art Exhibition***, which deliberately included Indigenous art. It was accompanied by the catalogue ***Creating Australia: 200 years of art 1788-1988***. By this time Indigenous art was about to be canonised into Australian art history.

***Papunya Tula: Genesis and Genius***, an Art Gallery of New South Wales exhibition curated by Hetti Perkins formed part of the 2000 Olympic Arts Festival, and was the first major exhibition tracing the movement stretching from the early 1970s to 2000. The 158 works by 51 artists were drawn from major public collections as well as private collections in Australia, Canada, England, Germany, Holland and the United States of America, ranging from the early vibrant Pintupi paintings to the minimalism of later works by such artists as Mick Namarari Tjapaltjarri and recent collaborative canvases. The ***Art from the Western Desert Spinifex Country*** exhibition was held in London in 2005.

The National Museum of Australia hosted the ***Papunya Painting: Out of the Desert*** exhibition (November 2007 to February 2008)[321] to great critical and public acclaim. The show was deliberately a museum exhibition – explaining who the painters were; why many of their finest works were collaborations; how these artists came to transfer traditional and sacred designs into a non-indigenous medium that appealed to the European aesthetic; how they incorporated the local landscape, their creation myths and their cultural narratives through a visual language of dots and symbols; and how these various symbols can be understood. The show highlighted paintings from the 1974 to 1981 from the Museum's collection – described by the curator,

[321] The exhibition subsequently moved to the Australian Museum in Sydney (5 July to 2 November 2008)

Vivien Johnson as "the most neglected and revolutionary decade in the history of Western Desert art"[322]. This had been a decade, after Geoff Bardon's departure from Papunya in 1972, of struggle during which a dedicated group of artists continued to produce an unprecedented array of original, high quality works that no one wanted to buy. Many rejected these non-traditional works as not authentic or not 'proper' Aboriginal art. The production of these works also sparked controversy amongst those in Aboriginal communities who felt that these artists had no right to reveal their shared Dreamings to the outside world.

In the 1980s the movement had flourished and other desert communities such as Utopia[323], Yuendumi, and Balgo also began to produce work for an outside audience. At Lajamanu artists had been apprehensive about making art intended for the public domain, and they were concerned not to lose rights to their land through the exposure of religious secrets. Nonetheless, in 1983 twelve artists went to Paris to construct a ground painting and perform open ceremonies as part of the exhibition of contemporary Australia art ***D'un autre continent: L'Australie, le réve at le réel*** at the Musée d'Art Moderne. In late 1985 a meeting of senior men gave approval for public paintings to be made. It was the men who created the first of these works, using house paint on large sheets of composition board, plywood and cardboard. At the same time women artists also began to paint, mainly in gouache on cardboard. In 1986 a group of women produced a set of paintings for the local school at Lajamanu with much the same intention as the men at Yuendumu three years earlier.

The history of the recent art of Utopia is punctuated by a series of survey exhibitions. The first of these in 1988 was a collection of eighty eight batiks[324]. The medium of painting was taken up in 1989 by artists in the second major survey exhibition, ***A Summer Project***. As with later projects of woodblock prints and watercolours, the survey introduced a wide range of artists to new

---

[322] Meacham, Steve *'Papunya Painting: Out of the desert' (Special Promotion), The Sydney Morning Herald* (Weekend Edition) 28-29 June 2008

[323] Several distinctive features emerged in the art movement in Utopia – it was largely the preserve of women rather than senior men, its roots were not in sand painting but in body-painting and Indonesian batik. The work of Emily Kngwarreye was particularly significant.

[324] The rise to prominence of Utopia artists began with the making of batik in the 1970s and continued with painting and other art forms as they were introduced in the late 1980s. The opportunity to gain a degree of economic independence through the sale of batik, as well as the social nature of its production which accords with local customs, led to the formation of the Utopia Women's Batik Group in 1978.

media. Along with batik, painting has become the most popular art form. The freedom of expression that artists find in batik carries through into paintings that range from highly formal compositions and narratives to works which dispense with conventional iconography of the desert altogether to incorporate naturalistic imagery and landscapes in the European manner.

An important leader of women's ceremonies, Emily Kame Kngwarreye emerged as one of the senior artists from Utopia. Kngwarreye, renowned as a great colourist, participated in the original Utopia Women's Batik Group and took up painting on canvas in the 'whole lot'...to capture totality. '***Seeds of Abundance***' (1990) is "a strong representation of the period of her career when she progressed from her lyrical beginnings of mark making in batik to the expression of the abundance of her country, Alhalhere, in vivid colour in the painting medium."[325] Whilst she had come to painting for the public domain relatively late in life, she already had a lifetime of experience painting representations of her totems and country in a ceremonial context on women's bodies. '***Seeds of Abundance***', with its representation of the profusion of colour and plant life, provides many points of comparison with the work of women artists in neighbouring desert regions, such as those in the National Gallery of Australia's collection. Kathleen Petyarre is another artist who attempts to capture the ambition 'to represent all'. She continues in the way her 'aunt' Kngwarreye more abstract, non-iconographic painting style, which is the distinctive contribution of the mainly female artists of the region to the contemporary Indigenous art movement

The classical traditions of the art of Balgo are similar to those found elsewhere in Central Australia. In the late 1950s soapstone and sandstone carvings of animals and objects were made. This practice, briefly revived in 1981 and 1982 has since been discontinued, and painting is now the main art form. The movement towards painting for an outside audience did not begin in earnest until 1986, with the exhibition ***Art from the Great Sandy Desert*** at the major art museum of Western Australia in Perth. Those at Balgo keenly appreciated this opportunity to establish the nature of their relationship to the land in the eyes of the world at large. Significantly, one of the major contributors to the exhibition, Peter Sunfly (Sandfly) Tjampitjin, was a senior Kukatja ritual leader

[325] Jenkins, Susan '*Colour and Country*', *Artonview*, National Gallery of Australia, Issue No.32, Summer 2002-03

The Kimberley region in the north-western corner of the continent is home to a variety of styles of art, the spread of which was determined by patterns of traditional exchange within the region. This is a corporeal landscape defined by history. Landmarks along the way read like a litany of human and supernatural presence. The diffusion process was accelerated from the end of the nineteenth century by the impact of European settlement and the changes this brought in the social conditions and mobility of the Indigenous people. The last two decades have seen a flourishing of artistic activity in the eastern Kimberley, the focus of which has been the community or Warnum at Turkey Creek – home to the local arts centre – established as part of the outstation movement that saw the return of the Gija people to their country. In a spirit of self-empowerment the Jirrawun Artists Corporation was established in 1998 with "the intention of creating a culturally appropriate and viable enterprise in the traditional lands of its artist members".[326] As with Papunya and elsewhere, events in the region show a contemporary development in Indigenous art which is rooted within traditional idioms. Pioneering artists like Rover Thomas, Paddy Jaminji, Queenie McKenzie, Jack Britten and others, championed the trademark East Kimberley aesthetic, "painting tracts of subtle hued ochre mapped by the phenomena of the land of their ancestors[327]," and continue to exercise a profound influence on artists forging reputations today.

The early 1970s were unsettling years. Amidst the social upheavals caused by the forced migrations of people, Indigenous elders were concerned that the younger generation was forfeiting its culture and law. In the early 1980s, outside interest in the emblems used in public ceremonies encouraged artists to paint boards of subjects related to the Kurirr Kurirr and other themes, not for ceremonial use but for sale. Rover Joolama Thomas, known for his use of natural pigments on canvas and large blocks of colour in seemingly abstract planes, is one of the most iconic contemporary Indigenous painters. His bold graphic expression revolutionised art from the east Kimberley region. Kimberley culture, traditionally hidden in the ceremonial context, began to be revealed to the public domain. Thomas, amongst others, led the way through his painting. Works such as ***Cyclone Tracey*** (1991) is not only an expression of cultural maintenance but also

[326] Perkins, Hetti *'Landscape inside out', Look Magazine*, Art Gallery of New South Wales, February 2003
[327] Perkins, Hetti *'Landscape inside out', Look Magazine*, Art Gallery of New South Wales, February 2003

express an enjoyment and engagement with the world. The subject of ***Cyclone Tracy*** by Rover Thomas recalls the origins of the Kurirr Kurirr ceremony. Rover Thomas had begun painting Kurirr Kurirr emblems in 1981, and over the next decade pursued a vigorous and prolific artistic life which led to his selection in 1990 as one of the first two Indigenous artists[328] to represent Australia at the Venice Biennale. Thomas elaborated on the pictorial conventions of the region to articulate a highly personal vision, introducing the interplay between broad areas of natural colour, unfaltering line, bold forms and uncompromising composition. In his paintings: the landscape becomes an allegory for ancestral dramas, personal experiences and historical events."[329]

The art of the northern part of Queensland, including that of the people of Cape York Peninsula, Mornington Island and the Torres Strait Islands, represents a number of distinct traditions, each of which today incorporates many variations and innovations. Culturally the region is not, and never has been, homogenous. In parts of the Cape, Indigenous people have maintained traditional links with their ancestral lands, while people of the Torres Strait Islands have cultural affiliations with Papua New Guinea and their art traditions are distinctive. As a consequence, the region is characterised by a diversity of art styles, influences and practices.

In 1992 Islander people gained native title to their land and coastal waters as a result of the Mabo case, officially recognising the invalidity of the 'terra nullius' claim by the British prior to European settlement. The process of cultural renewal which has underpinned such events in recent years has been marked by a flourishing of art practice by Torres Strait Islanders. In 1984 the opportunities for Indigenous people of the region to develop their art were enhanced by the establishment of an art school on Cairns, dedicated to their needs and providing a springboard to study and work elsewhere around the country. Nonetheless, many Islander artists have remained in the Torres Strait where they continue to develop traditional techniques and forms. In 2000, the touring exhibition ***Ilan Pasin*** proved a watershed in the appreciation of historic and contemporary Islander art.

---

[328] The other was Trevor Nickolls
[329] Caruana, Wally *Aboriginal Art* 2003, p.177

In March 2006 a number of recent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art acquisitions went on display in the National Gallery of Australia. Highlights included a range of works in different media by renowned artists from South Australia, East Kimberley, Far North Queensland, Victoria and the Torres Strait. The permanent collection draws from nearly 6.000 works and major changeovers are made regularly. Through the collection and display of significant works by Indigenous artists in an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art context and within the context of contemporary Australian and International art allows audiences to access many other facets of Indigenous culture and history and its place in the international arena.

As curator Brenda Croft[330] points out Indigenous curators of major exhibitions with Indigenous content (as distinct from curators of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art) are only too well aware of the complexities and multiple expectations associated with their curatorial decisions – expectations from artists, artists' communities, art centre and commercial dealer representatives, Indigenous and non Indigenous peers, and arts and cultural critics. There are multiple audiences, with different expectations and various levels of understanding of the diversity of Indigenous art and culture.

The '***Cultural Warriors: National Indigenous Art Triennial***', the inaugural National Indigenous Art Triennial, curated by Brenda L. Croft, opened at the National Gallery of Australia in October 2007 to mark a milestone year[331], coinciding with the 40th anniversary of the 1967 Referendum and the 25th anniversary of the National Gallery of Australia. It was a major survey show of contemporary visual art, forms part of the continuum of Indigenous innovation showcasing over 170 works created during the previous three years by 30 indigenous artists with a diverse range of styles and experience levels from urban and remote regions all around Australia, and paid tribute to a core group of artists whose respective careers spanned the forty years since the landmark 1967 referendum. Moses Gibson, a project officer with the National Gallery of Australia, claimed that 'the exhibition brings [the creators] together to present to the world

[330] Croft, Brenda L. '*Cultural Warriors: National Indigenous Art Triennial –No beginning, no middle, no end*', *Artonview*, Issue No.52 Summer 2007-08

[331] 2007 marked the NGA's 25th anniversary, the commencement of Stage 1 of the NGA's new wing being built specifically to accommodate the Aboriginal & Torres Strait permanent collection, the 50th anniversary of NAIDOC (National Aboriginal and Islander Day Observance Committee) and the 40th anniversary of the 1967 referendum. A selection of works from each artist was chosen to tour. The first National Indigenous Art Triennial, *Cultural Warriors*, opened on the 23rd October 2007.

traditional knowledge, cultural connections and differences, controversial views and opinions, and an undying spirit to fight for their rights (the same rights as all people in Australia)"[332].

While it ambitiously offered a comprehensive exhibition of the creative activity from across the country it was by no means either the complete or only account of current Indigenous practice. The plan is that, every three years, the National Gallery will mount a different Triennial with a different Indigenous curator who will select an entirely new group of contemporary Indigenous artists drawn from regions across the country. "Demarcations defined by others come and go, resurfacing and fading away: primitive, ethnographic, traditional, urban, naïve, folk, authentic – all these artists consider themselves Indigenous, first and foremost, their heritage being the framework and foundation, which underpins their creativity."[333]

Indigenous art is now quickly recognised overseas as 'Australian', and Indigenous artists have, over recent years, been prominent in significant international exhibitions like the Venice Biennale. After a highly successful Australian tour, during which it was seen by over a quarter of a million people, '***Australian Indigenous Art Triennial: Culture Warriors***' opened at the American University Museum at the Katzen Arts Center, Washington DC[334]. This provided further opportunity to expand what Americans understand about Australian Indigenous art and Indigenous history culture and views. Many museum-goers and collectors, already aware of the Central and Western Desert schools of painting, were challenged by the vast diversity and extraordinary qualities of contemporary Indigenous art represented.

The deaths or frailties of senior Indigenous artists across Australia would, for some mark the end of the perceived 'golden era' of Indigenous art, sounding 'the death knell for the sustainability of the market".[335] This concern assumes that the knowledge and seniority associated with the older artists is not being passed on to subsequent generations, who are being so strongly influenced by the impact of Western culture. Whilst it is true that the generation of groundbreaking artists have

---

[332] Gibson, Moses '*Culture Warriors on Tour', Artonview,* National Gallery of Australia, Issue No.54, Winter 2008
[333] Croft, Brenda L. *' Cultural Warriors: National Indigenous Art Triennial –No beginning, no middle, no end' Artonview,* Issue No 52 Summer 2007-08
[334] The exhibition form part of the Australian Embassy's ***'Australia Presents'*** program, developed to celebrate the talent and creative excellence of Australia's performing and visual artists.
[335] Fesq, Harriet, *'Are we at the end of the 'golden era' of Aboriginal art?' The Australian Art Market Report,* Issue 24, Winter 2007

either died or are now nearing the end of their lives, taking a wealth of cultural knowledge with them, a significant amount of this heritage has been effectively passed on to younger artists. Whilst the negative impact of substance and physical abuse and lack of services in remote communities on younger generations, but there is a sense of vitality in art production and promotion based on emerging artists' commercial sales and critical success.[336] As one generation passes on, subsequent generations have been emerging, working "in new media with new stylistic voices and drawing on both ancient education and present experience".[337]

## 3. EXAMPLES OF RECENT INTERNATIONAL EXPOSURE

While many commentators on contemporary Australian art have identified Indigenous art as the only unique movement that has come out of Australia - the ambassadorial role of indigenous art is still subject to debate. Even though, from the 1970s onwards, international interest in Aboriginal art has come in waves, there have in fact been astute and significant commercial gallery presentations, as well as a steady cross-pollination among artists, influential curators and museum directors.

Any determination about what contemporary art is has huge consequences for the reception of contemporary Indigenous art in Australia and internationally. In Australia there has been a slow metamorphosis in the cultural status of contemporary Indigenous art. Where once it was considered 'tribal' – the province of ethnological museums – it is now collected, accommodated and displayed in the main galleries of leading public art institutions and private galleries. Hogarth Galleries[338], Australia's oldest established Aboriginal fine art gallery has been supporting and exhibiting Indigenous art since the early 1970s, and establishing relationships with a number of communities – Papunya, Yuenduma, Warmun, Haasts Bluff and Arnhem Land. More recently, other galleries, like ARTMOB[339] in Hobart, have been established specialising in Indigenous art, developing a domestic and international clientele. ARTMOB deliberating defines its role as dealing in, and promoting Aboriginal 'Fine Art'.

---

[336] Fesq, Harriet, *'Are we at the end of the 'golden era' of Aboriginal art?'* (2007)
[337] Fesq, Harriet *'Are we at the end of the 'golden era' of Aboriginal art?'* (2007)
[338] Hogarth Galleries is one of the longest running private galleries in the nation, opening in 1972. The early years of the gallery were characterized by contemporary artists such as Sidney Nolan, Brett Whiteley, Lloyd Rees, Martin Sharpe and Mike Brown.
[339] The gallery has been operating since 2002 providing an outlet for local Aboriginal art as well as work from other Aboriginal communities. There is also an educative role in teaching and developing the client base.

Historically Indigenous art has been regarded as 'primitive' displayed alongside specimens of African and Oceanic art. The use of the term 'ethnographic' in this sort of context was not uncommon in the 1970s but curators would be unlikely to use it now when presenting contemporary art from any Aboriginal movement or community. "However, on the international stage, notions of antiquity, primordial human visual communication or cultural practices that extend through millennia constantly enter discourses – indeed they remain the entry point for significant international collectors."[340] Peter Brochensha of the Argyle Arts Centre in Sydney, for example, had arranged a large commercial exhibition at London's Qantas House as early as July 1974, which he described as being of great ethnographic and artistic significance.

Attempts to change perceptions of Aboriginal art have been marked by several challenges to established curatorial categories defining art, primitive art and craft. These generally involved the acceptance of ground designs and ceremonial items as installations and performance art, and therefore by definition, as contemporary art.

Key individuals also promoted and sought to broaden understanding of Aboriginal art during the 1990s which saw a shift towards solo exhibitions by cutting-edge modern practitioners, alongside survey and themed exhibitions. In 1994 however, the Cologne Art Fair still dismissed work by leading Indigenous bark painters from Gabrielle Pizzi's[341] gallery as 'ethnographica', deeming them 'tribal' or 'folk art'. Gabrielle Pizzi saw it as important that Aboriginal contemporary art be shown at the highest level possible in an international context, which is why she was so keen to exhibit works in places like Cologne, to the major art fairs, to museums in Russia, presenting it to as many people as possible. As recently as 2002, Australian art dealer Tom Spender claimed he was refused permission to show the works of Rover Thomas and Emily

---

[340] Isaacs, Jennifer *'1970-2001 International Exposure of Aboriginal Art'*, ***Art & Australia***, Volume 39, Number 4, June to August 2002

[341] Gabrielle Pizzi began collecting contemporary Australian Aboriginal art in the late 1970s, and started dealing in 1983, presenting her first exhibition of Aboriginal art at Roar Studios, Fitzroy, long before Indigenous art became significant on the cultural agenda.. In 1987 she opened Gallery Gabrielle Pizzi in Melbourne, representing artists from the communities of Balgo Hills, Papunya, Utopia, Maningrida, Haasts Bluff, Warmun/Turkey Creek and the Tiwi Islands. Pizzi also exhibits work by some of the most innovative city-based painters, photographers, video artists and installation artists. Her initial passion was Western Desert art, and her focus shifted from Central Australia, particularly Papunya Tula, to the innovative masters of Arnhem Land and urban-based artists. From 1990 onwards Pizzi regularly curated Indigenous art exhibitions internationally. She died on 5 December 2004.

Kngwarreye at the Basel Miami art fair in the US on the same grounds. A superb exhibition like the Paddy Bedford at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Sydney toured Australia, was unable to find the funds to go overseas, despite invitations from the likes of the Hermitage. Australian institutions don't seem to have the international linkages that make such touring possible. To ensure that Aboriginal art gets a fair showing in the international arena, there are good reasons for emphasising its contemporary art attributes, but acceptance may come down to the definition of 'contemporary art'. In November 2010 a new survey of Australian art will be hosted by the Ludwig Museum in Cologne.

Aboriginal art has been attracting attention from wealthy collectors and privately funded international art spaces. Unfortunately, when the works are shown in their new context, the lack of experience of the audiences and "the pervasive ignorance of the pluralism of modern Australian society, in which Indigenous artists are equal to all others"[342] can lead both private collectors and public galleries to retreat from any further explorations of Aboriginal art as contemporary art. American collectors and patrons in particular have assisted the exposure in the United States with varying degrees of success.

In 1988 the important exhibition, ***Dreaming: The Art of Aboriginal Australia***, opened at the Asia Society Galleries in New York, and later toured around the United States. This breakthrough exhibition was mounted by the South Australian Museum, and an American collector went on to commission a large collection of paintings and sculptures. This exhibition continued with, and more explicitly articulated, the agenda of showing works as contemporary Indigenous art. Whilst it was not universally well received by the critics, it drew significant crowds and alerted commercial galleries to the potential of such work. It emphasised the commercial potential of much of the art and drew attention, especially in the catalogue, to indigenous perceptions of the art as distinct from Western aesthetics.

John Weber, an advocate for the strength and power of desert paintings, hosted in May 1989 in his Greene Street Gallery in New York, the ***Pintubi and Walpiri paintings from Papunya Tula***

---

[342] Isaacs, Jennifer '*1970-2001 International Exposure of Aboriginal Art*', ***Art & Australia***, Volume 39, Number 4, June to August 2002

exhibition, organised by Gabrielle Pizzi [343]and others. In 1992 the World Bank in Washington hosted the ***'Modern Art – Ancient Icon'*** exhibition' featuring work from communities in the Western Desert and Arnhem Land, as well as works based on the elaborate patterns of Central Australian ground-mosaics.

In 2002 The Melbourne Museum hosted an extraordinary exhibition of contemporary Aboriginal art from the Gantner Myer Collection[344], featuring paintings, sculpture and fibre crafts from the Kimberley, Arnhem Land, Melville and Bathurst Islands and urban centres around Australia. This exhibition had previously toured San Francisco, San Antonio, Texas and Washington D.C.

Despite all the opportunities available to Australian artists, such as international scholarships and residencies, the representation of non-indigenous Australian art seems not to be foremost in the minds of those who represent Australia and its interests overseas. Exhibitions endorsed by Australian embassies, whether in foyer spaces or elsewhere, send a message that impacts on perceptions of Australia, and Australian art that is seen and collected outside Australia. In 1999, the Australian Embassy in Paris for example, hosted an exhibition curated by Gabrielle Pizzi, of Indigenous photography by Leah King-Smith, paintings by urban artist H. J. Wedge as well as sculptures from Arnhem Land as part of the ***'Reaching the World'*** Cultural Program of the 2000 Sydney Olympic Games. Official government spaces overseas could be used to show the broader situation of contemporary art in Australia.

In Australia, the metamorphosis in the cultural status of contemporary Aboriginal art has been slow. Previously identified as tribal art suitable for collection and display in ethnographic and anthropological museums, indigenous art is now collected by, and shown in, the main galleries of leading art institutions. Australian museums are devoting increasing amounts of space to the exhibition of Indigenous art

---

[343] In the late 1980s and early 1990s private galleries began to take a stronger role in developing individual Aboriginal artists and highlighting exhibitions of particular communities. Many, like Gabrielle Pizzi, extended this patronage and promotion on the international stage.

[344] The collection includes works by Ginger Riley Munduwalawala, Queenie McKenzie, Emily Kame Kngwarrey, David Malangi and Rover Thomas. For its exhibition the Melbourne Museum also included works from Museum Victoria's own collection as well as private collections.

Internationally the story has been very similar, with Indigenous art categorised as 'primitive' art and displayed alongside specimens of African and what has been generically labelled 'Oceanic' art. Increasingly international audiences, collectors and art professionals are acknowledging the contemporary and aesthetic values of Indigenous art, though there is still some way to go for full acceptance.

There has a gradual increase in interest internationally. Australia has been represented at the Venice Biennale since 1954, primarily in terms or works presenting the pastoral arcadia. The 1978 Biennale saw some reference to indigenous art and culture, and the 1990 Biennale focussed on works by Rover Thomas and Trevor Nickols, signifying a significant shift. There was significant debate about the three Indigenous artists included in the 1997 Australian Pavilion was aligned with the 30 year anniversary of the 1967 referendum. Since 1997, there has been no official representation of Indigenous art. Gabrielle Pizzi curated ***'Beyond Myth – Oitre Il Mito'*** an exhibition of Indigenous video, photography and photographic projections selected for inclusion in the official program of the later section in the 1999 Venice Biennale.

In Europe, largely bound by the conventions for the display of so-called primitive art, ethnographic museums maintained a monopoly on showing Indigenous art, reflecting attitudes that denied indigenous art its contemporary relevance. In 1993 and 1994 the ***Aratjara: Art of the First Australians'*** exhibition toured three European modern art museums, making a dramatic break with the conventions for display of so-called primitive art in ethnographic museums.

Three events in Basel seem to have been intended to challenge European attitudes to Indigenous art. In September 2005 ***The Art of John Mawurndjul*** opened at the Musée Jean Tinguely, Basel's leading contemporary art gallery - the first retrospective of his work[345] featuring more than 60 of his bark paintings produced between 1979 and 2005. At the same time, another exhibition of bark paintings opened at Basel's more conservative Museum Kulteren – these 30 works are taken from the museum's collection taken from Arnhem Land in the 1950s and 1960s. The hope was that audiences would, in seeing the two exhibitions, would be able to experience

[345] Only one other Indigenous artist has received the honour of a solo exhibition on Europe – Clifford Possum Tjapaltjarri, with his first solo exhibition at the Institute of Contemporary Art in London in 1988.

Mawurndul's work in its traditional, social and cultural context whilst appreciating its innovation. An accompanying symposium on the philosophical questions raised by the two exhibitions featured scholars, curators, museum chiefs, anthropologists and ethnographers from Europe and Australia.

Australian Indigenous art enjoyed a period of rediscovery in France. For the first time, during 2004, Indigenous works were featured in exhibitions in the Museum of Natural History in Lyon and the Museum of Marseille[346]. Both Christie's and Sotheby's exhibited modern Aboriginal art prior to their October sales in Australia. Art dealer Lauraine Diggins joined Stephane Jacob at the contemporary fair ***ArtParis*** in the Carrousel du Louvre, with interest particularly from French clients. Jacob went on to court Benelux collectors at ***ArtEvent*** in Lille.

There has been political and cultural controversy around the creation of the new post ethnographic Musée du Quai Branly, opened in June 2006. Whilst the new Musée du Quai Branly - built to house France's vast collections of African, and Oceanic art, including Indigenous art, and intended to be an enduring symbol of France's new relationship with the non-European indigenous world - was being heralded as a 'Great Leap Forward' in French museumship, it raises questions about why these arts should be housed in a separate museum rather than in the great galleries of Paris, like the Louvre, the Pompidou Centre and the Musee d'Orsay. At the core of the controversy is the role of the museum in reflecting a European nation's relationship with the non-European world – more specifically in Branly's case, France's relationship to the peoples of Africa, Asia Oceania and the Americas. Some at the French end of the project have sometimes revealed a 'primitivist' view of indigenous art. It seems that they are actively reconsidering their standpoint. The museum is intended to be not just about how Europeans viewed these cultures, but also about how these cultures viewed Europeans, including colonists.

This new cultural landmark enjoyed the personal patronage of former President Jacques Chirac, who asserted that it would realise the dream of 'collaboration between cultures' and occupy a position at 'the forefront of the international alliance of museological institutions'. It

[346] A show dedicated to work from Balgo.

incorporated the work of eight contemporary Indigenous artists - Paddy Ngunkuny Bedford[347] (East Kimberly, John Mawurndjul[348] (Maningrida in Arnemland), Ningura Napurrula (Western Desert), Lena Nyadbi (the Kimberley), the late Michael Riley[349] (Trailbragar Mission in NSW), Judy Watson (who identifies with her mother's country in North West Queensland), Tommy Watson (Pitanjatjata desert lands) and Gulumbu Yunupingu (Yirrkala in North East Arnhemland) were commissioned to create new works that extend the parameters of their art practice and our understanding of contemporary Indigenous art. The work of these artists, curated by Hetti Perkins of the Art Gallery of NSW and Brenda L. Croft of the National Gallery of Australia, are not only site specific but a permanent part of the building's Australian wing. The art critic John McDonald questions whether Indigenous work is reduced to the status of wall paper or mere décor, or an historic breakthrough in the international acceptance of Indigenous art as The Australia Council and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade would have us believe. Jeremy Eccles, however, asserts that there is a case to be made that Quai Branly was primarily a diplomatic exercise rather than either a cultural or commercial one[350]. Both curators are determined to show the French that indigenous art is not static and that it represents some of the best work emerging from contemporary Australia.

The museum houses just a fraction of the Musée's vast collection of about 300,000 objects[351] of the arts of Asia, Oceania and the Americas, including Indigenous artefacts and bark paintings. Only 4000 of these objects have previously been on public display. It is a versatile and multifunctional centre, with permanent exhibitions as well as up to twelve temporary exhibitions per year, often curated by outsiders investigating the interactions between items from the collection. The centre also offers a range of performances, events, and research facilities. Situated at one of the main entrances to the complex, the commissioned Australian Indigenous

---

[347] Paddy Bedford undertook a massive show at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Sydney, moving to Perth, Bendigo and the University Art Museum in Brisbane during 2007/2008

[348] John Marwurndjul was recognised in Europe with a significant solo exhibition in Basel and Hanover but not picked up by a single state gallery in Australia.

[349] Michael Riley had a generous retrospective at the National Gallery of Australia

[350] Eccles, Jeremy *Overseas sales of Australian art: Where the bloody hell are they? The Australian Art Market Report*, Issue 24 Winter 2007

[351] From the Musée's predecessors, the *Musée de L'Homme* and the *Musée des Arts d'Afrique et d'Océanie.* The latter started collecting Aboriginal art in 1960 when it purchased 250 works from Czech collector and painter, Karel Kupta. Neither museum was designed to cope with large exhibitions of contemporary art, and the decision was made to combine them was made in 1997. The collection has been one of the sources of controversy surrounding the new museum and underscores France's colonial past.

installations provide a conceptual entry point for the museum. It is a mix of ancient and modern forms that will show, according to the museum's managing director Stéphanie Martin, that Indigenous art is alive, both ageless and contemporary. The display of the collections aims to provide a sense of the constant variety, and the collections are to be viewed simultaneously as items of ethnographic interest and aesthetic beauty. The Indigenous painters from Australia will be the most significant contemporary artists displayed in the museum, because, of all the indigenous cultures, they – and perhaps the Canadian Inuit – demonstrate such a mix of tradition and modernity.

Paintings and Indigenous objects from Australia currently in the collection[352] include 40 synthetic polymer paintings, 230 bark paintings from Arnhem land communities, and more than 1,400 objects such as weapons, boomerangs and sculptures. Many of these pieces came from the expatriate Czech artist Karel Kupka's collection, gathered between 1956 and 1973. There is also an important collection of turingas, intricately carved identity tags bestowed on indigenous people at birth, which, because they are sacred, have never been displayed in Australia, where there is a risk that relatives of deceased owners might see them. In mounting displays of culturally sensitive objects, there is a concern to show respect for the beliefs attached to them. A key work in the collection is the original painting by David Malangi[353] that was the inspiration for the design of the 1966 one dollar note. Kupka was one of the first to write about contemporary Indigenous artists as individual practitioners, focusing on the aesthetic and symbolic qualities of their designs and materials. Abstraction is not the aim[354] – every dot, shape and line can have real meaning that can be recognised by the initiated. An outsider's inability to interpret is often an advantage.

---

[352] Items from the Kupka's collection went to three major collections – the Musée Nationale des Arts d'Afrique et d'Océanie (Paris), the Museum für Völkerkunde (Basel), and the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies (Canberra). In 1956 Kupka exhibited a collection of bark paintings at East Sydney Technical College.

[353] David Malangi Daymirringu (1927-1999) was one of the most renowned bark painters of Arnhem Land. He painted numerous subjects and dedicated his adult life to the development of a distinctive individual graphic style. His first major retrospective exhibition, ***No ordinary place***, mounted at the National Gallery of Australia, traces the development of his work from the early bark paintings of the 1960s onwards.

[354] Kupta, Karel *'Symbolic Painting'* (1962) in Stephen, McNamara, and Goad *Modernism & Australia: Documents on Art, Design and Architecture 1917-1967,* 2006

A number of less well-known exhibitions directly related to the Quai Branly opening, were held in Paris and London during June and July 2006. Papunya Tula Artists (PTA), for example, made its first ever curated foray into England[355], at the London gallery, Hamilton's, where 20 artists offered their finest work of 2006. The Buku-Larrnggay Mulka arts centre at Yirrkala developed a breakthrough Arnhem Land show from the collection of Arnaud Serval at the Passage de Retz Gallery in Paris, coinciding with Quai Branly.

In 1976, in conjunction with ***Asialink***, Gabrielle Pizzi brought together an exhibition, ***'Voices of the Earth'***, of contemporary Aboriginal paintings, photography and sculpture at the Jehangir Nicholson Museum of Modern Art in Mumbai, the Kamataka Chitrakala Parishath in Bangalore, India, and at the Seoul Arts Centre in Korea. In 2004 ***Our Country, Our Art*** was the first major exhibition of contemporary Indigenous art in Korea, featuring 45 works from five internationally recognised and seven aspiring artists

Some argue that the Japanese market is not yet ready for Indigenous art. In fact, international auction figures suggest that the Japanese market is not ready to appreciate contemporary art in any of its manifestations, or to even to embrace multiculturalism. However, ***Prism***, at the Bridgestone Museum in Tokyo in November 2006, was a serious show of 35 artists, with an accompanying symposium discussing the visual arts in the two countries, which brought together academics and museum directors, but not a single commercial operator. The art advisers at art centres from which twenty eight Indigenous artists came – 80% of the artists presented - were unaware of the shows existence, despite it being a major feature of the celebration of ***'30 years of Friendship'*** with Japan. It had managed to not engage in any significant way with the Australian art world. The exhibition title – ***Prism*** – was taken from an Imants Tillers painting showing an appropriated figure from European art pointing at an Indigenous image of country, revealed the background philosophy that Indigenous art has 'indisputable hegemony' over white art in Australia and that anything else of importance comes from diasporic immigration.

In 2006, the ***Maningrida Arts Centre exhibition***, was held in Bahrain. This was the first time Australian Indigenous art has been shown in the Middle East.

---

[355] Individual artists like Clifford Possum have been shown by the Hossak Gallery in London

Each year China is becoming more attractive to Australian artists, not only as a reflection of the country's status as a developing superpower or Australia's economic reliance on China's insatiable appetite for resources. Some say that there is a pervasive energy in contemporary Chinese art that distinguishes it from what is happening elsewhere. Beijing is the nerve centre for an art boom, with thousands of artist, massive complexes of studios and galleries and a never-ending cycle of events[356], including goodwill tours by Australian artists[357]. In May 2010, dot paintings from the National Gallery of Australia's successful 2007-2008 Papunya exhibition have been packed up and sent to the National Art Museum of China (NAMOC) in the heart of Beijing. This ***Papunya Painting: Out of the Australian Desert*** exhibition was to be the biggest collection of Aboriginal art to be shown in the Chinese capital. In an effort to enhance the understanding of indigenous cultures, detailed information labels, giving the artists' biographies and explaining the symbolism of the motifs will be translated into Mandarin. Chinese audiences seem to have been attracted to the work previously unknown to them, wanting to understand the symbolism of the paintings, and the Aboriginal rituals and traditions. In the wake of this exhibition, 'Imagine Australia' was launched at NAMOC on 9th June 2010 as the start of a year of Australian culture – a prelude to a 'year of China in Australia in 2011-2012. The Australian Pavilion at Expo 2010 in Shanghai was the fifth most popular attraction, thought the focus seems to have been more on business contacts and corporate hospitality – virtually the only place one could see any Australian art was in a private reception area, though a display of ceremonial poles from Arnhem Land was used at the beginning to represent the ancient history of the continent

**FINAL COMMENTS**

The definition of contemporary art is problematic – the question is loaded and has had huge consequences for the reception of contemporary Indigenous art in Australia and internationally. "Western ideas about aesthetics, the special status of the art object, the 'genius' of the art

[356] In Sydney, this vitality can be sampled by visiting the privately funded White Rabbit gallery for contemporary Chinese art.

[357] Such as a recent tour by a heterogeneous group of Australian artists, organized by artist Catherine Croll, who toured, and then spent a month in Beijing making work for a show at Red Gate Gallery, opening on 30 October 2010. Brian Wallace, owner of he Red Gate Gallery, has lived in Beijing for 30 years and has made huge efforts to cement cultural ties between Australia and China.

object's curator and so on intrude into the way contemporary Aboriginal art is 'read', no matter how hard the effort to treat it on its own terms."[358]

Contemporary Indigenous art practice is dynamic, diverse and very complex. Whilst there is increasingly broad acceptance of the legitimate display of a range of Indigenous art in museums, particularly art museums, dialogue continues about the relationship with other facets of Australian art and the degree to which it represents an Australian identity beyond the Indigenous community.

The concept of the 'other', whilst it has been around for some time, still has some currency in the 21st century, offering an "explanation for the continued bifurcation of practice and attitude in a nation that insists on its identity as multicultural, and yet is experienced by most non-Anglo Celtic Australians as two-dimensional: us (Anglos) and them (everyone else)"[359]. In Australia the 'Outsider art' framework readily accommodates Indigenous art, and Jen Webb argues that it is difficult for Indigenous artists, despite the increasing acclaim domestically and internationally, to speak or be heard except as 'other' and exotic.[360].

Danie Mellor, who won the Telstra National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Award in 2009, is one of a number of artists ambivalent about being labelled as an indigenous artist, preferring to be seen as an international Australian artist. There may well be a number of Indigenous artists recognised as 'capital A Artists', but something is going on in their work that is not likely to be happening in the work of other Australian artists, and the interests of Indigenous artists are not fully commensurate with the interests of the mainstream art world, especially the art market. This may be a sign of maturation in the way in the understanding of indigenous art and its place. Old colonial taxonomies are no longer appropriate – times and frameworks have changed, as have the communities that make up Australia.

---

[358] Bennie, Angela *'Modern master: Europe's view of Aboriginal art is under challenge', The Sydney Morning Herald* , 24 September 2009
[359] Webb, Jen *'Negotiating Alterity: Indigenous and 'Outsider' art', Third Text*, Volume 16, Issue 2, 2002
[360] Webb, Jen *'Negotiating Alterity: Indigenous and 'Outsider' art'*(2002)

A number of issues continue to feed the dialogue around Indigenous art – questions of appropriation and ownership of stories and imagery, relationships with land and community, appropriate display and explanation of works, the relationship between "traditional' and 'urban' artists, and who controls access to the commercial market and the proceeds of sales.The increasingly significant role that has been acknowledged for Indigenous art demonstrates that the Australian community has been, at a minimum reviewing and renegotiating its internal relationships and the ways in which we present ourselves internationally. The ways in which Indigenous art is collected, housed and exhibited, plays an important part in this ongoing and dynamic discussion.

# THE SHOCK OF THE NEW!
# CONTEMPORARY ART IN AUSTRALIA

Contemporary museums have in fact come a long way from the goals and practices of the early 19th century museums from which many emerged, increasingly reflecting a broader sense of culture, a range of community interests and sometimes linking to transnational ideas. These museums, along with a number of alternate exhibition spaces or venues, can be critical to the community's understanding of itself in the future - this is potentially of enormous significance to subaltern groups within societies, and to the community as a whole.

The museum context would be perceived as an incongruous environment for some groups and for some artists, who feel it more appropriate to represent themselves and their interests in other spaces. This includes many contemporary artists, including performance artists and street artists, as well as programs developed for and by minorities or marginalized groups who may feel 'out of place' in an art museum environment. The Australian public is more likely to see more contemporary or experimental forms of work in the Sydney Biennale, or in private galleries, rather than in the exhibitions generated by, or housed in, the more established museums and galleries. Digital technologies are continually developing and are having a huge impact - currently technology is not merely the means of transmission, it is the medium of so much contemporary art.

The idea of 'contemporary' has always meant more than just 'now', more than 'modern'. According to Terry Smith "an essential quality of contemporaneity is its immediacy, its prioritising of the moment over the time, the instant over the epoch, of direct experience of multiplicitous complexity over the single simplicity of distanced reflection...contemporaneity consists precisely in disjunctures of perception, in mismatching ways of seeing the same world, in the coexistence of asynchronous temporalities and in the jostling contingency of various multiplicities, all thrown together in ways that highlight the inequalities within and between them."[361] It therefore can never be restrained by the limitations of a particular period or

[361] Smith, Terry 'Biennales in the conditions of contemporaneity' ***Art and Australia***, Volume 42, Number 3 Autumn 2006

movement or even a particular space. The contemporaneity of work resides in its anxiety about the mobility of identity and the tentative nature of relationships with others and the world.

For much of the 20th century, despite the best efforts of the Contemporary Art Society[362] and other sympathetic groups, modern art had been, according to the art critic John McDonald, merely a novelty to most Australians. There was a greater interest in contemporary forms of interior design and decoration linked to commercially available products. This general attitude is evident in the 'tastes and business practices' of Sydney Ure Smith, "who published fulsome tributes to artists such as Arthur Streeton and Hans Heysen in his flagship journal, *Art in Australia*, while championing all things modern in his interiors magazine, *The Home*[363]" which did include modernist graphic work by leading women artists such as Margaret Preston, Hera Roberts, and Thea Proctor. Despite some 'furtive, guerrilla-like incursions' into the cultural landscapes of the 1920s and 1930s, it was not until the 1960s that the arts finally "shook off their insular Anglophile prejudices and fell in step with the modern world".[364] Without the constant influx of immigrants, especially after the Second World War, Australia would have been even slower to adopt modernist tendencies in a whole range of endeavours, including art. There is increasing interest in the contributions made by the various waves of émigrés arriving in Australia as they bring ideas and practices with them.

It is interesting to look at the ways which Australian art has been selected for exhibition overseas, and how that has shifted alongside other aspects of Australian representation. During the 1950s Australian art had acquired a fairly narrow definition, which seems to have had the stamp of official approval by the conservative Commonwealth Art Advisory Board (CAAB)

---

[362] The first exhibition was held In 1939. The Contemporary Art Society saw itself as standing for 'art' rather than 'official art', standing against 'reactionary and retrogressive art and art organisations, opposing painting, sculpture and drawing that had no aim other than photographic representation. In particular it opposed the 'Australian Academy of Art' (1937-1946) which in its opinion, fostered a spirit of exclusiveness and commercial monopoly damaging to individual artists and obstructing the spread of modern culture in Australia. Contemporary Art Societies had been established in Melbourne (1938), Sydney (1939) and Adelaide (1942) and a vigorous program of exchange exhibitions providing opportunities for artists to show works interstate.

[363] McDonald, John *'Gloomy tale of cultural failure: The story of modernism in Australia is as much about neglect as it is about celebration (Modern Times: The Untold Story of Modernism in Australia, Powerhouse Museum, until February 15)*, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, October 18-19, 2008

[364] McDonald, John *'Gloomy tale of cultural failure: The story of modernism in Australia is as much about neglect as it is about celebration (Modern Times: The Untold Story of Modernism in Australia, Powerhouse Museum, until February 15)*, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, October 18-19, 2008

which effectively controlled much of what was exhibited abroad at the time, effectively stifling contemporary Australian art at the time. In 1954, for example, the year of Australia's first Venice Biennale submission, the CAAB selected work by William Dobell, Russell Drysdale and Sidney Nolan, and in 1958 sent fourteen landscapes by Arthur Streeton and a handful of early Arthur Boyd works to Venice.

The exhibition ***'Recent Australia Painting'*** held at London's Whitechapel Art Gallery in June and July of 1961, was arguably one of the most significant events in post-war history of the exhibition of Australian art, and should be seen in the context of a brief 'golden period' for contemporary Australian painting in Britain between 1957 and 1963, and it became the first major event of its kind in London. The curator for *'Recent Australian Painting'*, Bryan Robertson[365], was able to make an independent selection of paintings based on his own judgement and advice from state-gallery directors in Australia, particularly Hal Missingham, then director of the Art Gallery of New South Wales. The initial conception behind the ***'Recent Australian Painting'*** exhibition was to focus on young emerging Australian artists and as an alternative to conservative exhibitions[366] being held around that time. Robertson, well aware of the deep-seated rivalry between figurative and abstract painters in Australia at time, sought to present a representative sample of both figurative and abstract works in what turned out to be a fairly comprehensive survey, though, despite attempts to define what constituted 'Australian art, it remained largely unresolved. ***'Recent Australian Painting'*** was a landmark exhibition in the sense that Australian artists became aware that a receptive audience for their work was emerging overseas, mainly in Britain. Some smaller group exhibitions were held in Britain over next couple of years. The exhibition was particularly influential in helping to launch the international careers of artists like Charles Blackman, Brett Whiteley, Lawrence Daws and Clifton Pugh, who continued to enjoy success in London, and the careers of a few were either made or consolidated.

---

[365] In 1959 Robertson had accepted Hal Missngham's offer to become the Art Gallery of New South Wales' buyer of contemporary works of art in London.. At the same time he distanced himself from approaches by Bernard Smith to become associated with the Antipodeans, a Melbourne-based group of artists who had come together to defend the tradition of the image in art and as firm opponents of abstraction. In February 1960 Robertson visited Australia as part of a whistle-stop lecture tour, visiting studios and galleries, and meeting as many artists and collectors as possible with the view to developing a broad-based exhibition of Australian painting at the Whitechapel, but by October 1960 he had trimmed his list.

[366] John Rotherstein, director of the Tate Gallery, for example was working on a larger scale exhibition project, ***'Antipodean Vision, Australian Painting: Colonial, Impressionist, Contemporary'*** to be shown at the Tate in 1963 which effectively became the 'official' exhibition in London that year.

By 1965, "except for a lucky few, such as Nolan and Boyd, who had escaped into myth or were content to paint Australia from a distance, London no longer seemed the place to be."[367] Other Australians more broadly involved in the 'arts', also took advantage of opportunities to make their names and establish careers in Britain during this period.

Before the advent of the Sydney Biennale in 1973, major international exhibitions of Contemporary Art were rare in Australia. There had been a long history of exhibitions from a single source or single country, and some, such as ***'Two Decades of American Painting'*** organised by New York's Museum of Modern Art for an Australian tour in 1967, had a powerful effect on artists and audiences. Until the mid-1970s it was, however, almost inconceivable that curators in major Australian institutions should initiate large exhibitions of contemporary works from many countries. Information gradually became available through catalogues, but there were few opportunities to travel to international exhibitions and interact with artists and fellow curators. Public exhibitions rarely explored experimental art, even within Australasia.

Art historian and museum director Andrew Sayers identifies a question that has beset Australian art since the late 1960s – about the relationship between art and life, the power of art in society and the limits of that power. Does art matter? Artists have tackled this issue from various perspectives - some emphasizing conceptual elements of art-making, others have moved art practice into "an apparently more public domain of architectural decoration, poster making and political activism"[368], others have been reviving the forms of arts and crafts traditional to those in marginalised groups, others have promoted the role of art as an expression of identity, whilst others have increasingly pursued photography as a 'de-aesthetized' means of visual recording. Something obviously happened in both Australian and international art in the late 1960s and early 1970s, a parting of the ways from a fairly single-minded 'high culture' to a more pluralistic, almost 'anything goes' situation. Despite the superficiality of some of these strategies, there is a level at which artists explored the relationships between the visual arts, language and politics – an exploration that would provide the theoretical backdrop for much

---

[367] Pierce, Simon *'Recent Australian painting: Australian artists in London in 1961' Art and Australia*, Volume 42, Number 2 Summer 2004

[368] Sayers, Andrew *Australian Art* (Oxford University Press, 2001), p 197

Australian art in the last decades of the 20th century. This is a multi-faceted discussion about the role of art and its relationship with the community in which it is produced.

In 1968, a year that changed the world in many ways, the National Gallery of Victoria opened its new building with the landmark exhibition entitled ***'The Field'***[369]. This exhibition, demonstrating a renewed commitment to contemporary art on the part of Australian public art museums, declared an unequivocal allegiance to the contemporary art in the United States, which was relatively a new idea in the predominantly Anglophile Australian art world[370]. The headquarters of the art world had largely moved to New York. The exhibition was a bold declaration of Australia's place in contemporary painting. It also launched the careers of a generation of significant artists. ***'The Field'*** drew together the works of forty Australian painters, all working in abstract styles variously described as 'hard edge' or 'colour field'.

Ambitious Australian painters seemed to have two options – the attractions of international, that is American, mainstream modernism, or the 'imperative of hand-crafting a distinctive – but nevertheless marketable – Australian cultural identity'[371]. These distinctions also had parallels in the political and social arenas. It was not clear how this Australian cultural identity was to be constructed, although some promoted the idea that visual artists should contribute to a figuratively based 'Antipodean mythography' reminiscent of 'the more literary' Melbourne elements and largely resisted by Sydney painters.

By 1968, there were other ways in which artists could engage with the nature of the art object, and a significant cohort of artists demonstrated a mistrust of the orthodoxy represented by exhibition. Donald Brook, in his 1969 Power Institute lecture entitled *'Flight from the Object'*, took aim at the role of the 'object' which had become a focus in late modernist theory against the doctrines of representation. In 1971, the Sydney theorist Terry Smith offered post-object art as an alternative to the commodification of art characterised by the art market. In retrospect it seems

---

[369] 21 August to 28 September 1968

[370] This affiliation was first sounded in 1967 with the success of the touring exhibition '*Two Decades of American Art.*

[371] Brook, Donald, *'1968' Art Monthly Australia*, No.195, November 2006

that such as hopes were illusory, and the art market and the media were not interested in these intellectual debates that lay outside the accepted ideology.

In 1973 the Art Gallery of NSW mounted the ***'Recent Australian Art'*** exhibition in an effort to show what the best young creative talents were doing, and was generally considered a worthwhile demonstration of the current state of contemporary art – the best survey show since ***'The Field'***.

While metropolitan artists debated the efficacy of art in society and the most effective approach to the object, Aboriginal art practice was beginning to shift from the periphery to a central position. This movement can be directly linked to the issues of the contemporary movement – abstraction, commodification, the nature of closed and open systems of meaning, and significantly, political empowerment. This shift was facilitated by the adoption of non-traditional media by artists in communities in Central and Western Australia for the expression of traditional motifs and bodies of knowledge. The 1970s saw artistic enterprises begin in a number of remote desert communities, most spectacularly the acrylic painting movement centred in Papunya. A 'white audience' - accustomed to the visual language of Abstract Expressionism, Conceptualism, Minimalism and Op Art -would be attracted to these apparently 'abstract designs', without necessarily knowing anything of the significance of the iconography. Andrew Sayers claims that there 'can be little doubt that the same post-Abstract Expressionist and Minimalist aesthetic which led to the wide marketability of the works of the women of Utopia was also responsible for the enthusiastic reception of the painters of the Kimberley in the northern part of Western Australia."[372]

Since the beginning of the 19th century Australia's art world had been preoccupied with the Australia's relationship with the rest of the world. The preoccupation has largely been with the physical and intellectual 'tyranny of distance' from Europe and American cultural centres. The 1970s however saw a significant renewed engagement with the long-standing notion of Australian culture, classically outlined in Terry Smith's essay *'The Provincialism Problem'*, published in the American journal ***Artforum*** in 1974, in which he encouraged artists to recognize

[372] Sayers, Andrew *Australian Art*, 2001, p 206

that art making is a 'thoroughly context-dependent activity'. A number of artists, including Imants Tillers and Ian Burn, engaged with the issues raised by Terry Smith. Tillers proposed that, rather than seeing Australian artists' isolation from original; canonical' works of art as a problem, it should be seen as 'creating a unique situation which should be embraced'[373] A great many works by Tillers and Burn made extensive use of pre-existing imagery and engages with the history of images made and consumed in Australia. Gordon Bennett is another artist whose work has consistently focussed on how Australian ideologies have been established and perpetuated through imported and local images. Bennett's strategy has been one of selecting images from Euro-Australian art history that have acquired particular meanings over time and placing them in new relationships with other images. He shared this strategy with many artists at the end of the 20th century, although Bennett's project derived particular significance from his own personal history as the child of an Aboriginal mother. As Andrew Sayers points out Bennett "has often employed in his paintings a kind of incommensurate layering through which he exposes the tensions and strains of Australian history"[374]. This kind of contemporary work references at least some of the complexities and layers that up the Australian community now is and what any 'Australian identity' might be.

In Australia there is a strong history of photography as a modern and effective medium for artistic endeavour whilst also recording the great people, events and achievements of the times and popular conditions. During the 1970s many artists again became vitally concerned with photography. It was a decade of theoretical engagement with the nature of photography's visual language, and a re-evaluation of photography's value as a contemporary art form. It was a time of great optimism for photography in Australia, culminating in the establishment of several specialist display venues[375] in Sydney and Melbourne. Bill Henson and Tracy Moffat have used photography as the medium for powerful and often enigmatic narratives.

Between the late 1970s and the 1990s a heightened sense of Australia's art history emerged alongside an unprecedented incorporation of historical and international references into

[373] Sayers, Andrew *Australian Art*, 2001, p 209
[374] Sayers, Andrew *Australian Art*, 2001, p 211
[375] The Australian Centre for Photography was established in Sydney in 1974, with the declared aim to 'promote photography as a visual art'

contemporary art works. This was not only an expression of the ongoing interest in Australia's relationship with the American and European art worlds, but also a consequence of increased opportunities to see and understand Australian art through more scholarly publications and exhibitions in public art museums.

The National Gallery of Australia, opened in 1982 was significant in increasing awareness of the history and shape of Australian art, including a range of traditional and contemporary media and examples of Aboriginal art. Many other galleries, both in metropolitan (especially Adelaide and Hobart) and in regional centres (such as Ballarat and Newcastle) presented coherent and well-documented displays of Australian historical paintings, allowing artists to engage with previously unnoticed facets of Australia's landscape painting.

The Art Gallery of New South Wales began to pay close and serious attention to Contemporary Art from the 1970s[376], recognising its importance to the Gallery's direction and programs with establishment of the Contemporary Art Department, and the appointment of the first contemporary curator in 1979. Whilst purchases had been made before this time, the unit implemented an active exhibition programme and acquisition policy, focussing on work which had developed since the 1960s, with an emphasis on more recent practices from the 1990s onwards. The Queensland Art Gallery has deliberately decided to focus contemporary art. As Lynne Seer outlined in 2007[377] the Queensland Art Gallery's focus on contemporary art and programming around it is born out of necessity as they do not have the breadth and depth of the 'heritage collections' held by other State galleries. The Queensland Gallery also focuses on art in the Asia Pacific region [378] (through the Asia Pacific Triennial for example) and children's programs (e.g. Children's APT) developing audiences from an early age.

---

[376] The contemporary Australian collection begins with the changes that occurred from the mid-1960s in art practice, a period of rapid experimentation when Pop, Minimal painting and Conceptual art were explored. Other areas of strength include abstract painting, post-modern art, and artworks from the late 1970s through to the mid-1990s covering critical experimental developments in art practice. Expressionism is also well represented. The ***'New Painting in Australia'*** exhibition (23 June to 12 August 2001) offered a selection of recent work from across the country.

[377] Seer, Lynne (Assistant Director of Curatorial & Collections Development, Queensland Art Gallery) '*Dichotomy: Risk & Tradition'*, ***Sites of Communication Symposium***, National Gallery of Victoria, 7 & 8 September 2007

[378] The Asian collection includes more than 400 works in a diverse range of media, from painting to digital video, the earliest dating from 1972 and including works by major artists from previous Asia Pacific Triennials. This group of artists form a significant component of the Kenneth and Yasuko Myer Collection of Contemporary Asian Art, established in 1983. The collection of contemporary Pacific art is one of the broadest in Australia.

Only with the emergence of a critical postcolonial discourse did cultural institutions show signs of seeking ways to understand what global cultures might be. For the first time in the 1980s, Western institutions changed their curatorial, critical and pedagogical practices in recognition that art was being produced outside selected metropolitan centres in Europe and America, and they sought to accommodate it in their programmes. Works by artists from around the globe increasingly rubbed against each other, even though the frameworks for these relationships were not particularly robust During the 1990s the so-called postcolonial practice had gained some degree of institutional acceptance, recognising that, at least at an ideological level, "a current of contemporary modernist art that was truly global in origin."[379]. While many postcolonial artists draw on "various traditions, whether out of respect, nostalgia or in a more sceptical critical manner, postcolonial art is a syncretic modernism that, in the spirit of modernism, is grounded in the temporality and spatiality of modernism, and its global orientation, rather (than) the specificity of place and locality that characterises traditional cultures."[380] Most postcolonial artists deliberately work across a range of styles and ideas. This is one reason why Indigenous art movements are rarely included in the global art scene, even though there was some interest in the Western Desert painters in the 1980s[381] followed by less attention in the 1990s in both European and Australian exhibitions of contemporary art. The nature of such exhibitions was seen as problematic. Urban Aboriginal artists working in a more typically postcolonial manner were preferred. Australian desert acrylic paintings "are about everything postcolonial art and criticism often deconstructs: place, tradition, and continuity. Yet, as if to confound such neat oppositional thinking, in the former settler colonies the Indigenous and the post-colonial are inextricably linked."[382] Paradoxically, the desert acrylic painters have emerged as an Australian art movement of international significance as Aboriginal art has benefited from the curatorial agendas of contemporary art spaces, keen to show an unprecedented variety of art practices.

---

[379] McLean, Ian, 'Postcolonial Traffic: William Kentridge and Aboriginal Desert Painters' ***Third Text***, Volume 17, Issue 3, 2003 (http://www.tandf.co.uk/journals)

[380] McLean, Ian, 'Postcolonial Traffic: William Kentridge and Aboriginal Desert Painters' ***Third Text***, Volume 17, Issue 3, 2003 (http://www.tandf.co.uk/journals)

[381] For example with the 1983 '*D'un autre continent L'Australie le Réve at le réel'* exhibition and the 1989 ***'Magiciens de la terre'*** exhibitions in Paris.

[382] McLean, Ian, 'Postcolonial Traffic: William Kentridge and Aboriginal Desert Painters' *Third Text*, Volume 17, Issue 3, 2003 (http://www.tandf.co.uk/journals)

Australia art had been shown fairly extensively in England, France, Japan, at ***Documenta*** in Germany, and at Biennales in Venice and São Paola, but US audiences had seen much less of it. In 1984 three exhibitions of contemporary Australian art were taken to the US. Many of those familiar with names like Brett Whiteley, Sidney Nolan, Lloyd Rees and Arthur Boyd may not have heard of the artists 'representing' Australia in these exhibitions. The three-man exhibition, ***"An Australian Accent"*** opening in New York[383] of Ken Unsworth, Mike Parr and Imants Tillers, was the brainchild of Australian art promoter and connoisseur John Kaldor[384], who was concerned more with how good the work was than how 'Australian' it was. . Nonetheless Kaldor was interested in the public and critical perceptions of this work as 'Australian', acknowledging that the three artists represented 'a maturity of expression and an originality of style that reveals a new authority in Australian art"[385] without attempting to do justice to the range of work being done in Australia at the time. It was possible that Americans would see this as so 'international' that the exercise was pointless as an Australian promotion. Kaldor hoped this exposure would not only stimulate the artists concerned and the Australian avant-garde, but also interest the New York public and facilitate the exchange of ideas between artists and their international colleagues.

One of the particular phenomena of the latter part of the 20th century was that proliferation of large survey exhibitions of contemporary art – Biennales and Triennales – in which works were brought together under a curatorial theme. Whilst some have been short-lived, new ones keep emerging. In every case the goal remains the same – to show, in a regular, ongoing manner, the latest developments in international contemporary art for the benefit of local artists and audiences. This aim distinguishes them from other kinds of exhibitions. Biennales are adaptive enough to deal with the challenges of the contemporary in ways in which museums, as collecting and exhibiting institutions, and art critics tend to find difficult – such as identifying significant contemporary art trends, looking at contemporary art from a global perspective and encouraging

---

[383] The exhibition (15th April to 10th June 1984) occupied 8,000 square feet of Long Island's PSI Contemporary Art Space, and featured 53 works by the three artists. During the exhibition thousands streamed through the PSI Gallery space, and it received rave reviews from the New York Times art critic John Russell..

[384] John Kaldor had brought a number of leading US and European artists during the 1960s and 1970s to work in Australia to stimulate an awareness of international art. He was largely relieved of this responsibility by the proliferation of institutions, boards and committees using generous sums of public and private money.

[385] Kaldor, John, 'Preface' ***An Australian Accent: Three Artists – Mike Parr, Imants Tillers, Ken Unsworth,*** Project Studios One – The Institute for Art and Urban Resources (John Kaldor Project 7) PSI New York 1984

dialogue between biennales. "The fundamental idea of the Biennale is to show the Australian public what events and arguments are shaping the creative and critical context of contemporary art around the world in the absence of a constant flow of contemporary shows from overseas in our public and private galleries:"[386] This places enormous pressure on any Biennale to fulfil expectations.

The Sydney Biennale has become the biggest event on Sydney's art calendar, often to attracting fairly harsh comment both from critics and Sydneysiders, though it is perhaps marginally less popular or controversial than the annual Archibald. In 2003 Leon Paroissien asserted that the Sydney Biennale provided regular exposure of international and Australian artists in this context of an international "exploration of contemporary art and its accompanying critical dialogues has assisted the education and maturation (in artistic terms) of three successive younger generations of artists in this country"[387], and more importantly, contributed to an awareness in Australia that cultural developments may occur domestically as well as internationally, and, in the case of Aboriginal art, have been doing so for thousands of years.

Commentators antipathetic to contemporary art, portraying biennales as repetitious, elitist and 'motivated more by the demands of cultural tourism than their avowed art-world purpose of linking local art practice and taste to international standards.'[388], object less to the exhibition format than to the fact that, over recent decades, it has been such an effective forum for the dissemination of the types of art they dislike, such as, conceptual, audio-visual and installation work. Despite the Sydney Biennale's credentials, it is regarded by some as 'crack-pot collection of conceptual artworks from ever-remoter regions of the world'[389]. According to Steve Meacham "Ask around about the works in any biennale and certain words come to the fore. Pretentious. Silly. Pompous. But, then, according to the cynics, the definition of contemporary art is something that is neither contemporary in the sense it has anything to do with the real world nor

---

[386] Bond, Tony *'The Biennale, the Search for Meaning'*, *Look Magazine* (Art Gallery of NSW) May 1986
[387] Paroissien, Leon, *'The Biennale of Sydney: a partisan view of three decades'*, *Art and Australia*, Volume 41/1, Spring 2003
[388] Smith, Terry *'Biennales in the conditions of contemporaneity'*, *Art and Australia*, Volume 42, Number 3, Autumn 2006
[389] Eccles, Jeremy *'15th Biennale of Sydney'*, *The Australian Art Market Report*, Issue 21, Winter 2006

dependent on any obvious artistic talent."[390] Nick Waterlow, curator of a number of Sydney Biennales, had not been concerned by critical responses to contemporary art in general, or the Biennale in particular, as long as the criticism is constructive and doesn't stop people coming to see and decide for themselves. Isabel Carlos, Portuguese-born curator of the 2004 Biennale, argues that it is more important to respond to contemporary art that to understand it. She sees contemporary art as real and a portrait of today's world, and that, whilst many of the selected works are confronting and provocative, that is the nature or art and she hopes that visitors will challenged by them.[391]

The art critic, Peter Timms asserted that 'contemporary art' was 'solipsistic, pursued its own agenda with little regard for or engagement with an audience's need for profound reflection and thought, let alone aesthetic pleasure. In fact, contemporary art is deliberately 'abtruse'...so that audiences will find it 'difficult', and therefore think it clever and profound, when really it is just banal and facile."[392] The term 'Contemporary art' now engages an extraordinary range of media – installations, video, ephemera as well as photography, paintings, drawings and the like. The art historian, Terry Smith defines 'contemporary art as "art produced within what (he calls) the condition of contemporaneity – that is, the condition of the immediate present, the now. It is art produced in response to the experience of the now."[393]. Biennales became important, not as exhibitions of works of art, but as a means of grappling with issues that most traditional art criticism avoids, showing what art looks like internationally in the immediate present. Contemporary art is therefore a dialogue.

The Sydney Biennale was only the third art Biennale[394] to get going in the world – after Venice[395] and Sao Paolo – bringing art, artists, art writers as well as visitors from many

---

[390] Meacham, Steve, *'Biennale of Sydney: Scene, not heard, The Sydney Morning Herald (Weekend Edition)*, June 12-13 2004

[391] [391] Meacham, Steve, *'Biennale of Sydney: Scene, not heard', The Sydney Morning Herald (Weekend Edition)*, June 12-13 2004

[392] As cited by Bennie, Angela '*Shock of the now: an object lesson', The Sydney Morning Herald,* June 11 2004

[393] As cited by Bennie, Angela '*Shock of the now: an object lesson', The Sydney Morning Herald,* June 11 2004

[394] Thanks to the Italian roots and wealth of the Belgiorno-Nettis family. Franco Belgiorno-Nettis expanded his company's Transfield Art Prize into the first Sydney Biennnale

[395] The Venice Biennale is the oldest and most prestigious, beginning in 1895, at much the same time as the Olympic Games were established. It was hoped that international friendship and understanding could be promoted by such cultural exchange. The Museum of Art at the Carnegie Institute held its first International 1n 1896 in Pittsburg in the

countries. This kind of exhibition has always and unashamedly had both artistic and cultural tourism motivations. Visitors to the Venice Biennale, for example, are attracted by the "contrast between the burgeoning contemporaneity of the exhibits and the relentless aging of the city itself."[396] There are now about 40 Biennales spread around the world over a two-year period. The first Adelaide Biennale of Australian Art was held in conjunction with the Adelaide Festival of the Arts in 1990. In Australia, the Mildura Sculpture Triennial, begun in 1961 as a sculpture prize, became a significant focus of avant-garde sculpture in Australia in its heyday in the 1970s.

In addition to these events, Australia supports selected artist exhibitions in its purpose built pavilion in the Venice Biennale, the world's oldest and most prestigious contemporary art show. An invitation to exhibit is highly regarded as the featured artists are selected from around the world, and it provides opportunities to access a vast audience. Some of Australia's best-known contemporary artists, including Tracey Moffat (1997), Bill Henson, Peter Tyndall and Simon Linke (1998), Ron Mueck (2001) and Leigh Bowery (2005), have exhibited at the Venice Biennale both in the official pavilion and outside it.

The first Biennale of Sydney was held at the Sydney Opera House in November 1973 aiming to present an international program that challenges traditional thinking and encourages new levels of enthusiasm for contemporary art in the Australian context. The rationale was to bring innovative and exciting work from around the world and to present Australian work in an international context. The fact that we are geographically isolated from some of the oldest established art centres, gives the Sydney Biennale an even greater significance as a forum for contemporary art in this part of the world. The Australian selection, with the advice of Daniel Thomas, the senior curator at the Art Gallery of NSW, was clearly a professional choice. The international selection had been largely sources through the Department of Foreign Affairs and Australian embassies. Although the event was disappointing to some there was an important sense of goodwill towards the Transfield initiative[397]

---

US. No more significant Internationals were established until after World War II, when the Sao Paolo Bienal (Brazil) was founded.

[396] Smith, Terry '*Biennales in the conditions of contemporaneity', Art and Australia*, Volume 43, Number 3, Autumn 2006

[397] Paroissien, Leon, '*The Biennale of Sydney: a partisan view of three decades', Art and Australia,* Volume 41/1 Spring 2003

The main arena for the second Biennale in 1976 shifted to the Art Gallery of New South Wales, with additional events and performances at other venues. The curatorial selection of artists from Japan, Korea, New Zealand and the U.S. West Coast gave particular form to the Biennale's initial vision to focus on the 'Pacific basin'.

Although Nick Waterlow, as curator, moved away from a focus on the Asia-Pacific region, his reorientation towards Europe drew attention to the work by a younger generation of European artists alongside that of older artists largely neglected in Australia in favour of American artists. In 1979 Europe was emerging as the centre of artistic activity after New York's 20-year domination, hence '*The European Dialogue*' of the 3rd Biennale in that year. It could be argues that this reflected shifts in international relations on a broader level. The exhibition itself forged initial strong links with contemporary Europe, and spilled out into a number of galleries throughout the city, broadening access by audiences.

Reflecting the increased interest in Indigenous art and higher political profile, Indigenous works started to be shown in an international contemporary context in the Sydney Biennale.[398]. The fourth Biennale, *'Vision in Disbelief'*, in 1982 included artists working in performance, video and sound, among them a group of Walpiri Aboriginal people from Lajamanu in the Northern Territory, who created a large sand painting at the Art Gallery of NSW. "The riveting presence of the artists performing and 'singing up' their work and country on the morning prior to the opening reflected a major shift that was occurring in the representation of Aboriginal art at that time: the presence not only of some selected Aboriginal works (as had already occurred in 1979) but also of Aboriginal artists themselves at Australian events, and the negotiated 'representation' of Aboriginal culture, in particular, varying forms."[399] The biennales have contributed to the increased visibility of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art in the collections of every major

[398] As cited by White, Judith, '*Global Vision: Be moved, be surprised, but above all be there for the Sydney Biennale 2000*', *Look Magazine* (Art Gallery of NSW) June 2000

[399] Paroissien, Leon, *'The Biennale of Sydney: a partisan view of three decades' Art & Australia*, Volume 41/1 Spring 2003

Australian art museum. Works by Indigenous artists in the ***'Abstraction in Australia'***[400] exhibition at the Art Gallery of New South Wales in 1990 for example, demonstrated ways in which views of abstraction were enlarged to relate to Aboriginal narratives with an intransigent symbolism.

Many of the themes in Australian art in the late 20th century had come together in ***The Aboriginal Memorial*** (1988) which initially appeared in the Biennale of Sydney[401]. This work of public sculpture, conceived as both a celebration of the continuation of Aboriginal culture, and as a commemorative gesture for those Aboriginal lives lost in the course of European occupation in Australia. The ***Memorial***, whilst representing a deep relationship to a particular topography is also a powerful political statement and an extraordinary display of the richness of the visual languages of Aboriginal Australia.

Increasing awareness and interest in developments and critical dialogues were reflected in Biennale themes during the 1980s. In 1988 the Art Gallery of NSW traced connections through the works of four generations of Australian artists together with their European precursors. Australian figuration and landscape[402] can be compared, analysed and assessed against the European sensibility of Leger, Mattise, Balthus, Artaud and Hilton. These precursors were seen with contemporary artists – Parr, Nixon, Tillers, Shark, LeWitt and Brown-Rrap with their European and American contemporaries "post-modernist and post-modern preoccupations, revealing the elements that have connected Australia, or set it apart from the rest of the world."[403] The different perspectives are probably most apparent in the interpretation of landscape.

The Sydney Biennale allows a volume of work to be seen first-hand and in an Australian context, which enables people to see art "in a truly international perspective and connect for ourselves the

---

[400] This exhibition explored recent directions taken by 15 contemporary Australian artists working in an abstract mode, revealing a diversity in contemporary abstract art practice. Work by Indigenous artists – Peter Skipper, Rover Thomas and Emily Kngwarreye were included.

[401] ***The Aboriginal Memorial*** was subsequently moved to the National Gallery of Australia in Canberra for permanent display

[402] As seen in the work of Preston, Balson, Fairweather, Nolan, Boyd, Tuckson, Williams and Hester

[403] Berriman, Ann, *'The Australian Biennale: From the Southern Cross - A View of World Art 1940-1988', Look Magazine,* Art Gallery of New South Wales, May 1988

movements and areas of exploration in both Europe and Australia."[404] It also led the way in hiring a single curator or director with vision to articulate a broad sweep of the art world at a moment in time, proposing a theme or an exhibition outline. The concept of a unified curatorial vision is a hallmark of the Sydney Biennale, unlike the Venice Biennale, where government agencies in each country select artists for national representation and a series of national pavilions vying for international recognition. In 1990 German curator Rene Block was the first foreign director of the Sydney Biennale since its inception, following up the theme of the 'Avant-Garde'.

In choosing the curatorial director for the Biennale of Sydney there has often been an attempt to get the best of both worlds – someone who understands the local context as well as the international scene. The formula has not always been successful, nor has the idea of bringing in a fully imported curator. According to the art critic John McDonald, the most successful biennales were those organised by local curator Nick Waterlow and the international curator Rene Block from 1986 to 1990, which were full of memorable works and competing ideas, and where painting and sculpture seemed to be full of possibilities. There has been an attempt to be of genuine and provocative interest to a wide cross-section of the public in ways that many contemporary art exhibitions and events have not engaged viewers. Melbourne art historian, curator and author Charles Merewether was keen to expand the contemporary art event across Sydney, including 16 sites and venues across the city, including the inner-west and western Sydney. That year, the Biennale boasted that a record 315,000 people attended during the two-month festival – 35,000 more than the 2004 Biennale. Amongst the 72 artists, there was a strong Australian presence, as well as invited guests from areas such as the Baltic States, Eastern Europe and Asia.

The Biennale has changed and expanded over the years, particularly since the crisis year following the 1996 event when it was rescued from voluntary administration, and the Biennale's financial future was secured. The growth was fuelled not only by additional government funding,

---

[404] Berriman, Ann, '*The Australian Biennale: From the Southern Cross - A View of World Art 1940-1988' Look Magazine,* Art Gallery of New South Wales, May 1988

but also increased corporate and private donations[405]. The question emerges as to why hard-headed business identities might support something as 'whacky' as contemporary art, in a way that they would not have been possible decades ago.. Some would argue that the time has come for them to be seen promoting contemporary visual culture, not just sport. In sponsoring the Sydney Biennale they are supporting an organisation committed to international dialogue and the presentation of up-and-coming Australian artists in an international context. The horizons of contemporary art have grown since the Biennale's inception, increasing the range of people encountering Contemporary art, and there is increased interaction with what is going on in a diverse range of media in Australia and internationally..

The Sydney Biennale alternated every second year with ***'Australian Perspecta'***, instigated by the Art Gallery of NSW in 1981 as the largest and most significant exhibition of the latest contemporary art within Australia to balance the international preoccupation of the Sydney Biennale. In mounting the ***'Perspecta'***, the Gallery aimed to contribute to the "demystification and wider understanding of contemporary art within the broader community."[406] The first was a large exhibition of 148 works, predominantly paintings, by 70 artists. Audiences had the opportunity to experience art that is of a challenging, unusual and innovative nature not usually shown in museums.

In 1981, 1983 and 1985 only a small touring component visited regional galleries. In 1985 the representation was very broad including 194 artists. The 1987 ***'Perspecta'*** was restricted to 17 artists including a broad spectrum of age and ideology. In 1988 the entire exhibition travelled to Perth in Western Australia and to three venues in Germany. Most of the artists represented in this exhibition – a generation of artists exploring the boundaries of art using new media, performance, video, photography and often returning to painting - have represented Australia in major overseas shows in Venice, New York, Los Angeles, Berlin, London and Paris. "All the work has reference to the conceptual history of art since 1968, a year in which much was

[405] After the 2003 Myer Report into arts funding led the Howard government to pledge $750,000 over the next four years. The Biennale also now has a raft of corporate sponsors, headed by Transfield and John Scheffer's Tempo Services

[406] Lynn, Victoria, '*Pushing Back the Boundaries: The 1991 'Australian Perspecta' exhibition', Look Magazine*, Art Gallery of New South Wales August 1991

established philosophically both here and overseas."[407] The primary criterion for inclusion was the artist's role in the transition from the 1970s to the 1980s in Australian art. All had been "involved in the struggle to create a platform for individual creativity free of the hegemonies of received cultural values from overseas"[408] making them suitable for inclusion in the Bicentennial event. Inspiration for the 51 artists selected for the 1993 ***'Perspecta'*** ranged from the 'hidden joys and horrors of urban living' through to a concern with abstraction and with contemporary debates about Australian cultural identity. This ***'Perspecta'*** also tried "to frustrate the binary divisions between 'traditional' and 'urban' Aboriginal artists, making it clear that both groups share the same depth of attachment to identity and the land...At a time when Australian art is coming into contact with the art of other cultures, issues about aesthetic judgement and aesthetic validity naturally arise."[409] The inclusion of these works in ***'Perspecta'*** tested the critical paradigms used to assess art in this country. The theme – 'between art and nature – became evident in the 1997 ***'Perspecta'*** which became a city-wide visual arts festival. The theme was seen as timely and relevant in the context of public debate about the 'Green' Olympics and an increasingly eco-conscious society. The weavings from Arnhem Land represented the integral relationship between cultural identity, language, country and nature that is experienced by the Indigenous people of Ramingining, Galiwin'ku, Gapu'wiyak and Yirrkala. These objects are "visual expression of landscape and its human occupation...Unlike anthropological or visual art displays this installation of weavings creates the experience of a complete eco-system and bodies the relationships between nature, ancestral stories and the economics of human survival."[410]

In 2007 curator, John Stringer, brought together sixteen artists for the Museum of Contemporary Art's third biennial exhibition, ***Cross Currents***, featuring works from leading artists from around the country. Stringer acknowledged that it was impossible do put together an exhibition of contemporary Australian art, without including the work of Aboriginal artists. Whilst they may a minority in the population, they are particularly significant in terms of what's going on in the art

---

[407] Bond, Tony, '*The Australian Bicentennial Perspecta*', *Look Magazine,* Art Gallery of New South Wales, October 1987

[408] Bond, Tony, '*The Australian Bicentennial Perspecta*', *Look Magazine,* Art Gallery of New South Wales, October 1987

[409] Lynn, Victoria, *'The Weird and the Wonderful: Australian Perspecta 1993', Look Magazine* , Art Gallery of New South Wales, October 1993

[410] Lynn, Victoria, *'Australian Perspecta 1997: Between Art and Nature', Look Magazine,* Art Gallery of New South Wales, *August 1997*

world. Djirrirra Wunungmurra's[411] ochre designs share floor space with the likes of An Xian's ornate ceramic busts and Gareth Sansom's monstrous painted figures.

Elizabeth Ann Macgregor, Director of Sydney's Museum of Contemporary Art (MCA), argues[412] that, rather than deliberately ignoring or even alienating audiences, curators of contemporary art have been working to engage audiences, and to promote contemporary art in Australia and internationally. All contemporary museums are seeking to expand and develop audiences, conscious of the competition for public attention and the increasing need to secure funding from other than public sector sources. The problem of defining 'contemporary' art, as distinct from 'modern' art continues to be difficult. Works from the great movements of the 'modernist' era, such as abstraction, are not necessarily any more or less accessible to audiences. Macgregor argues that, by encouraging more people to see contemporary works, it is possible to challenge the narrow definition of contemporary art and to refute the elitist tag. Education has, since its opening, been a part of the MCA's brief with an extensive public programme of guided tours, outreach projects, material for schools and lectures by international speakers, artists, curators, writers and film directors. The Museum is now embarking on new extension plans sympathetic to the existing building and due to open in 2010, to improve internal access to gallery space and to provide a new education wing to accommodate the increasing number of school groups coming through over the last five years.

Whilst the history of the Museum of Contemporary art[413] had been controversial, and it had been perceived as being out of touch with the artistic community, elitist in terms of its audience, and not attracting the right level of exhibitions, there seems to be little doubt that it has found a

---

[411] An artist from Yirrkala, a small community on the north-eastern tip of the Northern Territory.

[412] MacGregor, Elizabeth Ann, '*What is Contemporary Art- and does it really matter?' Regional Galleries Summit, Mildura*, 19th April 2001

[413] In 1999 when Elizabeth Ann Macgregor took over as Director of the MCA after Bernice Murphy's sudden departure in November 1998, the gallery was operating on an $863,000 per year deficit, and she found herself in the middle of 'hardball politics' being fought by the three bodies deciding the MCA's future – the NSW Labour government, Sydney City Council and the University of Sydney which owned part of the collection. Gallery accommodation was also a major problem, and some improvements have been made, such as the acquisition of off-site storage creating space on Level 4 to show highlights from the collection. The financial crisis has been largely resolved with the NSW and Federal government pledging support, and earned income, sponsorships and donations forming the bulk covering the bulk of the Museum's costs. Free admission to the museum , originally made possible in 2000, by a $540,000 sponsorship deal with Telstra, has significantly boosted annual visitor numbers, especially amongst the under-35s. Although the deal ended in 2006 free admission has continued.

sustainable role in the art scene and the ongoing discourse about Contemporary art. The Museum has clearly tried to reconnect Sydneysiders with contemporary art.

The role of a museum like Sydney's MCA is to profile the art of today rather than to present the broad sweep of artistic activity – providing opportunities for constructive dialogue between living artists and audiences about contemporary issues and realities and future possibilities. Artists are working in a wide range of media expressing new ideas and reconsidering old ones. The MCA emerged initially from Dr John Power's collection[414], formerly languishing inaccessibly at the Power Institute at Sydney University for 30 years due to the lack of exhibition space. Dr Power's intention was to make the latest ideas and theories in the 'plastic arts' publicly available in Australia, through lectures, teaching and the purchase of the most recent contemporary art in the world. The MCA's initial exhibition series featured works grouped around themes of pop art, kinetic art, abstraction, surrealism, and works by John Power – these shows allowed the display works by important artists like Andy Warhol, Bridget Riley, Helen Frankenthaler, Kenneth Noland, Joseph Beuys, Roy Lichtenstein, Jörg Immendorff and Robert Rauschenberg.

Comparisons have been drawn between the role being carved out by MCA and aspects of the Art Gallery of NSW's programme. Edmond Capon, Director of the Art Gallery of NSW, says that there is, and should be, room for two institutions dealing with contemporary art in a city the size of Sydney in a complementary rather than competitive way. The contemporary art museum, in reflecting contemporary culture, needs to be able to accommodate a broad range of styles and media, including Aboriginal art in its various manifestations. These definitions raise questions about whether or not it is appropriate for a contemporary art museum to build up a permanent collection, which will by definition become an historical record. The Museum of Contemporary

[414] The Museum of Contemporary Art (MCA) evolved from the Power Gallery of Contemporary Art within the Power Institute of the University of Sydney, which had been collecting avant-garde works since 1968. In 1991 the MCS opened in the refurbished Maritime Services Board building at Circular Quay under with Leon Paroissien as Director and Bernice Murphy as chief curator. Apart from the *J.W.Power Collection* (numbering around 4,000 works), the MCA also holds 'The *Loti and Victor Smorgon Collection of Contemporary Australian Art'* donated in 1995, '*The Maningrida Collection of Aboriginal Art'* held in trust on a long-term basis and most recently exhibited in 2003, '*The Ramingining Collection of Aboriginal A*rt' and '*The Arnott's Biscuits Collection of Aboriginal Bark Paintings'* donated in 1993. An important initiative in 2005 was the introduction of an indigenous curator, Keith Munro, and an indigenous advisory group. The MCA opened in 1991 in what was the Maritime Services Building at Circular Quay. It was not until 1998 the MCA finally became the second significant venue for the Sydney Biennale.

Art is carefully buying a small number of works[415] - signature works by major Australian artists, work by younger artists before they get too expensive, and Aboriginal art..

The Queensland Art Gallery's commitment to Contemporary Art can be seen in its unveiling of the Gallery of Modern Art in 2006 incorporating the '***Children's Art Centre***'[416], and its involvement in the ***Asia-Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art***[417], which is the gallery's flagship international contemporary art event. The paradigm shift undertaken by museums in the last two decades, has meant that these institutions are focussing on preserving and presenting works and engaging audiences in dialogues around those works. Whilst many 'adult' audiences are suspicious of contemporary art, the Queensland Gallery has found that children are naturally attracted to it, especially the experiential facets of it. They enjoy it, or dislike it without prejudice. Since 1998, the gallery has devised programmes promoting children's interaction with contemporary art, aiming to create a foundation for their lifelong engagement with the arts. Some critics of the gallery believe that it "it is bringing art down to the people instead of the people up to the art"[418]. Time will tell whether it makes a significant impact on the public's appreciation of the arts in the future. These developments in the public institutions raised the profile of Contemporary Art and increased public exposure to Contemporary Art, though not necessarily without controversy.

In early 2009 the MCA brought together a selection of pieces acquired from the ***Primavera*** exhibitions since 1992 ***"To Make A Work Of Timeless Art: MCA Primavera acquisitions". Primavera***, now one of the longest-running contemporary arts events in the country, was initiated by a bequest from the Jackson family – the idea is to show a cross-section of work by emerging artists aged 35 and under. The art critic, John McDonald, claims that, looking back, the highlights have been few and far between[419] and that most of the survey exhibitions have been

---

[415] At the end of 2003 the board approved Macgregor's proposal to use a small operating profit to start buying works again – acquisitions had not been possible for a number of years due to the MCA's financial difficulties.
[416] The centre specialises in programs that foster the creative and learning potential of children through working directly with contemporary artists. Permanent facilities have become available in the Queensland Gallery of Modern Art.
[417] The fifth in the Triennial series, featuring 30 to 35 artists from Asia, Australia and the Pacific, opened in November 2006
[418] Harper, Alison, *'Parochial push onto the national stage', Art Market Report*, Issue 16 Winter 2005
[419] McDonald, John, *'Trash or treasure', The Sydney Morning Herald,* 17-18 January 2009

disappointing. In fact, he found the selection or representative works a depressing reflection of the state of contemporary art in this country. McDonald identifies a painting by the Western Desert artist, Yukultji Napangati as one of the more interesting works. In McDonald's view, the world's most exciting contemporary art is currently emerging from China claiming that "(t)here is a vision, a boldness and a hunger among Chinese artists that is rarely found in their Australian counterparts"[420]. In South Korea, and to a lesser extent Japan, contemporary artists are currently showing a similar dynamism.

Art fairs, like the Melbourne Art Fair, held every two years, can provide a valuable means of viewing, appreciating and learning more about contemporary art. The Melbourne Art Fair's rigorous exhibition rules, selection criteria and the participation of significant Australian commercial galleries filter the works represented so that it provides a snapshot of the domestic and regional contemporary art scene, and it now has the reputation as one of the pre-eminent trade fairs in our region, indicating the state of the market for contemporary Australian art.

According to Diana Harrison, from the Salamanca Collection in Hobart, many of the more established private galleries won't take chances or take risks in what they exhibit or artists they represent, especially in economically uncertain times[421] when buyers tend to prefer traditional or conservative choices[422]. Purchases are often coloured by investment value. Some galleries work hard, like the Salamanca Collection, at presenting work that will challenge potential buyers, even though it may not sell well at this stage. This is seen as an aspect of their educative role, whilst supporting and promoting local artists, especially young artists.

Katrina Lumley, curator at the Newcastle Region Art Gallery, noted[423] that they have long had various spaces, sometimes totally dedicated to local artists. Now the Newcastle gallery has a

---

[420] McDonald, John, 'Trash or treasure', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, January 17-18 2009

[421] *Interview with Diana Harrison, Assistant Director, The Salamanca Collection, Hobart* (11 April 2005)

[422] If premium works, for example from the Heidelberg School, are not available or are too expensive, buyers tend to look for works by secondary artist like Elioth Gruner

[423] *Interview with Katrina Lumley, Curator, Newcastle Region Art Gallery*, NSW (19 April 2004). Newcastle Region Gallery has one of the best collections of contemporary painting from 1968 to 1980, using '***The Field***' exhibition as the pivotal starting point – some 120 works related to 1968 and beyond, representing pretty well all the artists from '***The Field***', and they have deliberately sought out works from artists represented in his pivotal exhibition.

small space for new and experimental work by artists, including local people working on something and they want to 'test the air', or show experimental or particularly avant-garde works without the commercial considerations of private galleries and dealers. As a regional gallery, Lumley recognised the need to accommodate everything from holograms to sculptural installations and so on. Curatorial staff need to think ahead about the possibilities and how the gallery is going to be able to exhibit artworks to the best advantage in the future. Jane Stewart, Director of the Devonport Regional Art Gallery in Tasmania, observed that most interstate and domestic visitors had a pretty good idea of Australian art, but not so much about contemporary art, and she finds it helpful to provide interpretive material and be prepared for some degree of antipathy. Stewart, whilst the gallery has a responsibility to represent the broadest range of art forms, believes it is important to challenge visitors about conceptual and contemporary art[424].

Exhibitions by contemporary artists mounted by public institutions within Australia are well attended, and some of these artists are getting high prices in the commercial market, domestically and internationally. Contemporary artists like Tracey Moffat and Imants Tillers are having more solo museum shows than most, but there is a risk that Australian artists will disappear into an 'international haze' rather than retaining an identifiable presence in Australian culture. This raises the proposition that, whilst overseas sales are an exception rather than a necessity, an artist has a 'cultural duty' to his or her community that lies above an individual's career, in which case the primary value in going overseas is to promote your country – as the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade would seem to believe.

Without the post-war influx of immigrants, and subsequent waves from non-European sources, Australia would have been even slower to come to terms with modernist trends. Those artists who have migrated more recently from Asia and the Middle East, without the cultural associations with Europe, approach their work differently as they adapt to representing subject matter in the Australian context. As we have already seen Indigenous art has emerged as a

---

[424] *Interview with Jane Stewart, Director of the Devonport Regional Art Gallery, Devonport, Tasmania* (13 April 2005). There was some negative reaction to the deaccessioning pf some lesser items, such as lesser works by key Australian artists like Boyd and Whitely that had been acquired some years ago. There were not enough of these works and they were not sufficiently significant to provide any kind of overview of Australian visual history or of an individual's body of work, or to be of any academic interest in their own work. This deaccessioning also freed up funds for other more strategic purchases.

significant component of the contemporary art scene, and has also developed an increasingly significant public and critical acceptance both in Australia and internationally. Whilst Australian society becomes increasingly pluralistic, and contends with its international responsibilities, contemporary artists also reflect the community as it grapples with the issues that arise. It is no longer possible to maintain a distance from international trends and influences.

Australia has long struggled with the notion of the 'Contemporary' – there have, over the decades, been strong and very influential conservative forces that have been resistant to new ideas and have discouraged the general public's access to, and discussion of any ideas or work that is new, 'avant-garde' or experimental.. Despite this, the Sydney Biennales, and institutions like Sydney's Museum of Contemporary Art and the Queensland's Gallery of Modern Art have attracted increasingly large audiences to its various events at different locations. Younger audiences have been particularly drawn to contemporary art collections and associated events.

In the contemporary environment the nation's identity can be seen as increasingly fluid and contingent and possibly fractured, which can be seen in the presentation of contemporary art in contemporary spaces. Many contemporary museums have undergone major re-evaluations of their 'modus operandi' particularly over recent decades, attempting to reflect a broader sense of culture, a range of community concerns and an interest in looking to the future. This, for some, has created tensions in terms of how they should deal their existing collections, supporters and networks. It has also been a difficult period for many museum professionals and managers as the traditional categories of museum expertise and practice, and the focus on collection development and research have been challenged by a push towards audience development and engagement.

# CONCLUSION

The interest in identifying a distinctive and autonomous, postcolonial national experience coincided with the growing international interest in the new social history from the 1950s onwards. Interest in popular culture also became bound up with a national interest in delineating a distinctive Australian culture. Especially from the 1990s onwards, an Australian identity has emerged that is plural, fluid and self-referential. Questions of identity, meaning and representation continue to be of crucial importance, and museums retain a role in the public discussion within and outside the walls of the physical institutions.

There has been an essential shift in our understanding of what history, culture and identity are about and how they relate to each other.. The realms of myth, which is more concerned with an alternate reality rather than chronologically defined events, and history, which refers to what people have done and experienced in this world, are increasingly interrelated, and this is no more evident than in the representation of 'nationality' and 'national identity' which are themselves contested concepts. It can be difficult to distinguish between myth and history, or to clearly determine which is more valid. There are no unambiguous attributes attached to them, such as birth, race, stature or status. Countless human migrations and changes in borders have ensured that there is "rarely an easy relationship between defined territories and distinctive national or ethnic groups"[425]. Cultural theorists have been concerned with questions of national identity – how it's created, its cultural meaning, its constructedness, its forms or representation. The role museums have played in defining and shaping the public's understanding of Australian identity, and the forces that have shaped it, has recently become a matter of considerable interest to many.

There has been much discussion both in academic circles and the popular press about the role of national cultural institutions, or museums, in defining and shaping a nation's identity. Museums have a clear role in the narration of stories about the temporal context of their community, and the presentation of collective and individual memory, experience, explanation and interpretation identity is inevitably one facet of this. Museums are a significant component of our 'national

[425] Partington, Geoffrey *'The National Identity of Australia' http://www.norepublic.com.au/essays/Essay_National_Identity.html#Head title* (3/6/2005)

communities of memory' where individuals and groups learn how to remember the past and what is important to remember for the future. They have also become sites which act as cross-cultural meeting grounds and 'interspaces' for the mediation of different modes of knowledge and experience. Museums in Australia today are increasingly presenting and examining controversial issues and diverse aspects of their stories.

Contemporary institutions face particular difficulties in negotiating ad presenting competing interpretations of national histories and national identities – seeking "to represent competing histories, contested certainties and cultural difference through their structures, spatial arrangements, collection polices and exhibition strategies"[426] Some have suggested that museums might settle for some kind of 'common ground' or agreed essence of national identity, whilst others have suggested that, in order to be inclusive, national museums should abandon any attempt to articulate 'who we are'. The spotlight was placed on this debate through the public controversy faced by the National Museum in Australia and the subsequent review in 2003, and the developing profile of Indigenous culture and art as distinctively 'Australian' yet remote, ancient, contemporary and diverse. Several institutions are working out how to represent these developments effectively.

Australian museums reflect what has been occurring in the country over the last fifty years – a re-evaluation and a redefinition of Australian culture and society. This thesis has looked at the way in which how public museums acquire, manage and exhibit their collections of art works, now regarded as demonstrating this distinctively Australian identity, in ways that reflect and stimulate public awareness and discourse around issues of Australia's shifting identity, social dynamics and place in the world. An 'Australian' identity has been articulated, whether consciously or unconsciously, as much by those members of the art world who selected works for acquisition by, and subsequent display in, public collections, as by the artists themselves. I have considered the role of public collecting and exhibiting institutions – the art museums – more than the works of artists themselves in detail, to assess the way they have acted to shape an 'Australian' identity, and facilitated community dialogue about that identity. An identity has

---

[426] Dean, David & Rider, Peter E. *"Museums, Nation and Political History in the Australian National Museum and the Canadian Museum of Civilisation" Museum and Society,* Volume 3 No.1 March 2005

emerged that is plural, fluid and self-referential. Questions of identity, meaning and representation are of crucial importance

Australia's distinctiveness was being found less in its political structures than in its culture, both high and low. The exhibition of art has a parallel story, and at many levels overlaps, with the display of other facets of social history, and institutions are working hard to engage not only with existing audiences, but new ones. Over recent years these institutions have become more media savvy, to develop their public profile, publicise programs and exhibitions and engage in debates about their place in Australia.

In an environment of ever increasing fiscal pressure on resources and accountability, there has been increasing political and public scrutiny of the work of publically funded institutions, especially as funding from the public purse has become less freely available. Museums and galleries have turned to commercial sponsorship, private benefaction, new partnerships and commercial enterprises to supplement income and broaden public exposure. Particularly over recent decades institutional and disciplinary distinctions become blurred, and museums, not always renowned for working collaboratively, have at least to some extent reviewed their areas of expertise and re-negotiated ways of working together, complementing each other's policies, collections and exhibition practices, especially Museums have been forced to re-think and plan more strategically to make better use of resources and expertise and to develop what may be seen as non-traditional partnerships. Strategies have included a recognition of some degree of specialisation in terms of collecting, cooperation between museums in mounting exhibitions, programmes of loans and touring exhibitions, and the sharing of professional curatorial and conservation expertise.

Ron Radford, Director of the National Gallery of Australia, sees the core function of an art museum as 'to preserve, research and interpret works of art, and their accompanying information for the public benefit'. A great art museum therefore, collects and conserves works of aesthetic excellence, researches them rigorously, and interprets works, based on this scholarship, for the museum's audiences. A 'national gallery', however, draws not only local visitors but also interstate and international visitors, many of whom would not normally visit museums in their

home regions, but who are looking for something particular about the country or region they are visiting. These local and international audiences also include politically sensitive audiences which note the profile, or lack thereof, given to their community's art.

Australian culture, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, has always been a highly visual one. The National Gallery of Australia's collections, exhibitions, publications and building therefore needs to articulate something of our national and international cultural and strategic aspirations. This would apply similarly to the National Museum of Australia, the National Portrait Gallery, the National Library of Australia and even the National War Memorial, rightly reflecting recent Australian history and, situated in the national political capital, they also need to be relevant to contemporary strategic concerns and engagements.

With the emerging articulation of multiculturalism in late 20th century Australia studies of 'Australian culture' have proliferated. The 1970s considerations of racial and cultural inclusion/exclusion appeared at a time when 'Australian culture' was once again being consciously defined under the rubric of the 'new nationalism'. By the 1990s it had become clear that Australia's history and culture has been more complex than previously acknowledged, taking into account the diverse histories of groups within the community and contemporary reflections must also tell of 'cultural ferment' and 'dynamic hybridity'. Traditional descriptions of national identity no longer convey Australia's complexity. Certain events manage to trigger public debate about what makes up guiding national values and principles that are 'truly Australian'. A core set of national values is increasingly difficult to negotiate in a modern and diverse society attempting to accommodate the ongoing development of distinct ethnic, cultural and religious communities and come to terms with indigenous cultural issues.

A task for cultural historians is to explore the ways in which understandings and representations of the landscape and its residents have shifted over time. The trinity of 'land, landscape, place' to which we might add 'space', has been understood as crucial to our cultural identity. So much of the imagery of landscape, however, has grown out of a sense of isolation and an apprehension of nature as a detached and distant entity, capable of stirring the most elemental of emotions. When these landscapes have been populated, the relationship is even more clearly articulated – this

relationship is often difficult, dislocated and painful, especially for non-indigenous occupants. In Australia, with a disjunction between urban pockets in which most non-indigenous people live and the spacious continent that continues to occupy their collective imagination, this attitude frames the way artists have depicted the land and our relationships with it. Many artists, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous retain a speculative vision about Australia, especially those who focus on landscape – a combination of topography and the outcome of imagination.

In Australia, we have had the chance to create cultural institutions that would reflect Australian society as it was and as it has evolved - the story of who we are, where we have come from and the people, events, ideas and the forces that have shaped what might be called an Australian identity. Consideration still needs to be given to the fact that Australia's cultural heritage collections, whether in Commonwealth ownership or in state or regional institutions, form a collective whole that is a resource for Australians. In this context, the National Portrait Gallery in Canberra, one of the few portrait galleries in the world, cannot operate effectively in isolation.

Portraiture has traditionally been concerned with documenting and recording likenesses for posterity of those who had a beneficial impact on society. In the 20th century, with the shifting emphasis in portraiture towards providing an insight into the multiple aspects of an individual personality rather than just their deeds and professional achievements, national portrait galleries are increasingly seeking to change their role. There has now been some degree of reassessment of what constitutes 'national portraits' and a redefinition of national significance. Portrait galleries today must satisfy the aesthetic, as well as the historical demands of viewers, balancing the voices of the powerful and the previously powerless. My interest here is how these shifts have been, or could be, reflected in the portrayal of the Australian identity in the public arena.

The relationship between visual culture and national identity is particularly intense in contemporary Australia because of the central role played by Aboriginal art in providing a voice and international attention of indigenous people. Indigenous art remained relatively unknown until the 1950s. Interest in, and familiarity with, Aboriginal culture and conditions grew. For the most part though, it was only when public concern with racism in its local and international manifestations increased rapidly from the late 1960s that historians moved to the forefront of the

investigation of the indigenous colonisation, dispossession and institutionalisation. Particularly from the 1970s onwards the profile of contemporary Aboriginal art has lent a powerful new force to the question of Australian identity in the arts, including the visual arts, and it was not until the 1980s that works began to enter the collections of most mainstream Australian galleries, or gain broad recognition as an important facet of Australian art. Indigenous culture is now highlighted as offering something more complex, ancient, sophisticated and unique than the old bush mythologies which formally signalled Australian nationhood. A combination of indigenous aesthetics and activism has demonstrated that it is impossible for any national identity to be based on an exclusively colonial reading of Australian history.

Questions emerge about the ways in which museums shape knowledge by collecting and exhibiting Indigenous art, traditionally excluded from the 'hallowed walls of the fine art galleries of the West', and the role played by curatorial interventions in shaping narratives, creating dynamic dialogues between works, display devices and audiences. It is clear that there is no 'body of work' as such, but rather there are, across Australia, Aboriginal groups who identify themselves variously and there is a diverse body of Aboriginal art work, including the work of contemporary artists, some of whom do not identify as Aboriginal artists, though they do identify as Aboriginal. There is still an unstable, and sometimes contradictory, relationship between 'settler' art and 'Indigenous art', as Indigenous artists increasingly look at ways to present their own stories and interactions with the rest of the Australian community. Indigenous art has also gained a significant profile internationally, perceived as distinctively 'Australian', simultaneously remote, ancient and extraordinarily contemporary. Western scholarship continues to engage with indigenous art, though this engagement has not always been easy.

Australia has generally struggled with the notion of the 'Contemporary', the ongoing dialogue about new technologies, the pace of change and engagement with international trends. There have, over the decades, been strong conservative elements that have been resistant to new ideas and have discouraged the general public's access to 'avant-garde' or experimental work, or participation in the discussion of new ideas. Despite the best efforts of the Contemporary Art Society and other groups for much of the 20th century, modern art had been little more than a novelty to most Australians. Without the constant influx of immigrants, Australia would have

been even slower to adopt modernist tendencies. Despite some 'furtive, guerrilla-like incursions' into the cultural landscapes of the 1920s and 1930s, it was not until the 1960s that the arts finally shook off some of their fundamental conservatism. Before the advent of the Sydney Biennale, major international exhibitions of contemporary art were rare in Australia. Increasingly audiences are engaging in a range of contemporary art events in major centres, as well as participating in debates about its role. Distinctions between traditional forms are blurred with the increased use of performance and electronic media to create, participate in and access works.

Mixed messages are everywhere, reflecting the ongoing re-evaluation of Australian identity and our role internationally. The community, as well as academics, arts administrators and media commentators, seem to be keen to participate in the debate how Australian cultural institutions can collect, interpret and present material in ways that will engage audiences in something that contributes to their understanding of Australian culture and identity and provokes ongoing discussion, and perhaps an acceptance that 'national identity' per se' will never be conclusively defined or ultimately fixed.

# BIBLIOGRAPHY


Abasa, Susan — *'The Creative Vision of John Olsen' (Interview conducted with Deborah Hart),* ***Look Magazine,*** Art Gallery of New South Wales, May 1992

Adelstein, Elvira — *'Fire's On: Sir Arthur Streeton 1867-1943'* ***Look Magazine,*** Art Gallery of New South Wales, August 2000

Alivizatou, Marilena — *'The politics of 'arts premiers': Some thoughts on the Musée du Quai Branly',* ***Museological Review***, a journal edited by students of the Department of Museum Studies, University of Leicester (Issue 13, 2008)

Allen, Christopher — ***Art in Australia: from Colonization to Post Modernism*** Thames and Hudson (World of Art Series), London 1997 (reprinted 1998)

Allen. Christopher — *'The lonely but familiar places of Clarice Beckett'* ***Art Monthly Australia***, 1999

Annear, Judy — *Australian Perspecta 1995'* ***Look Magazine***, Art Gallery of New South Wales, February 1995

Appleyard, R.G — *'History of the Gallery'* ***Art & Australia,*** Volume 19 Number 1, Spring 1981

Arndt, Bettina — *'Archibald poser'* ***The Sydney Morning Herald,*** 9 March 2004

Ashley, Susan — *'State Authority and the Public Sphere: Ideas on the Changing Role of the Museum as a Canadian Social Institution'* ***Museum and Society***, March 2003 Vol.3. No.1 www.le.ac.uk/ms/m&sframeset.html

Attwood, Bain — *'Whose dreaming? Reviewing the Review of the National Museum of Australia'* ***History Australia, Journal of the Australian Historical Association***, Volume 1, Number 2, July 2004

Auty, Giles — *'Tale of Two Arthurs'* ***The Weekend Australian***, 5-6 June 1999

Barker, Garry — *'Digital Archibald entry is a sign of the times* ***The Sydney Morning Herald***, 26 April 2005

Benjamin, Roger — *'Prophets of the desert'* ***The Sydney Morning Herald*** (Weekend Edition) 12-13 February 2005

Bennett, Tony — ***Pasts Beyond Memory: Evolution, Museums, Colonialism*** Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, London & New York, 2004

Bennett, Tony — *'The Political Rationality of the Museum''* ***Continuum: The Australian Journal of Media & Culture***, Vol.3 No.1 (1990) Institute for Cultural Policy Studies, Griffith University http://www.mcc.murdoch.edu.au/ReadingRoom/3.1/Bennett.html 30/6/05

Bennie, Angela — *'John Coburn: Sacred sights in three colours'* ***The Sydney Morning Herald*** (Weekend Edition) 22-23 November 2003

Bennie, Angela — *'Shock of the now: an object lesson'* ***The Sydney Morning Herald***, June 11 2004

Bennie, Angela — *'Old eyes, new vision: Galleries around the world can't get enough of a new alchemy of art'*, ***The Sydney Morning Herald***, (Weekend Edition), 25-26 September 2004

Bennie, Angela — *'From little things, big things grew'* ***The Sydney Morning Herald,*** 29 October 2008

Bennie, Angela — *'Modern Master: Europe's view of Aboriginal art is under challenge'* ***The Sydney Morning Herald***, 24 September 2005

Berriman, Ann — *The Australian Bienale: View from the Southern Cross'* ***Look Magazine***, Art Gallery of New South Wales, May 1988

Bibby, Paul — *'Capturing the real me: an actor lets go of his façade'* ***The Sydney Morning Herald***, (Weekend Edition) 24-25 February 2007

Bond, Tony — *'The Biennale, a Search for Meaning'* ***Look Magazine***, Art Gallery of New South Wales, May 1986

Bond, Tony — *'The Australian Bicentennial Perspecta'* ***Look Magazine***, Art Gallery of New South Wales, October 1987

Bond, Tony — *'Australia Perspecta 1989'* ***Look Magazine***, Art Gallery of New South Wales, May 1989

Bond, Tony — *'Advancing the Avant-Garde – the 1990 Biennale'* ***Look Magazine***, Art Gallery of New South Wales, April 1990

Bond, Tony — *'Self Portraits: Co-curator looks inward for the genesis of a major new exhibition'* ***Look Magazine,*** Art Gallery of New South Wales, September 2005

Bond, Tony — *'Artists as Models: Co-curator takes us on a virtual tour of key works in a new AGNSW exhibition'* ***Look Magazine***, Art Gallery of New South Wales, February 2006

Bonyhady, Tim — *'When a picture packs a punch: Nothing works better than a great photograph when it comes to selling the green message to a wider public'* ***The Sydney Morning Herald***, 10 June 2004

Boxer, Sarah — *'Besotted by Nature's Grandeur'* ***New York Times*** (*nytimes.com*) 11 July 2003

Brook, Donald — *1968,* ***Art Monthly Australia***, No. 195, November 2006

Brown, Malcolm — *'Artist brushed off at Archibald winner'* ***The Sydney Morning Herald*** 13 May 2004

Burke, Kelly — *'Gallery accused of selling indigenous fakes'* ***The Sydney Morning Herald***, 29 July 2008

Burke, Janine — *'Boyd's World'* (Review of ***Arthur Boyd: Art and Life*** by Janet McKenzie) ***Australian Book Review***, Issue no 227, December 2000/January 2001

Burn, Ian — ***National Life & Landscapes: Australian Painting 1900-1940*** Bay Books, Sydney/London 1990

Butel, Elizabeth (Compiled) — ***Art and Australia by Margaret Preston: Selected Writings 1920-1950***, Richmond Ventures Pty Ltd, 2003

Butler, Roger — *Margaret Preston, Australian Printmaker (18 December 2004 - 10 April 2005)* ***Artonview,*** National Gallery of Australia, Issue No.40 Summer 2004

Butler, Rex (Editor) — ***Radical Revisionism: An Anthology of Writings on Australian Art***, Institute of Modern Art (IMA), Brisbane 2005

Butler, Rex — ***A Secret History of Australian Art*** Craftsman House, St Leonards, Sydney 2002

Button, James — *Artists' stories will live on forever in Paris museum,* ***The Sydney Morning Herald*** (Weekend Edition) 10-11 September, 2005

Button, James & Banham, Cynthia — *'Chirac's distant view'* ***The Sydney Morning Herald*** (Weekend Edition) 24-25 June 2006

Cadzow, Jane — *'The gallery & the gift horse'*, ***The Sydney Morning Herald*** (The Good Weekend) 15 March 2003

Campbell, Bronwyn — *'Culture Warriors storm Washington'* ***Artonview***, National Gallery of Australia, Issue 60, Summer 2009

Campbell, Helen — ***'Wynne Centenary Exhibition 1897-1997'***
***Look Magazine,*** Art Gallery of New South Wales, April 1997

Campbell, Helen — ***'Russell Drysdale 1912-1981'***
***Look Magazine,*** Art Gallery of New South Wales, April 1998

Carroll, John — *'Response to Bain Atwood's Whose Dreaming?''* ***History Australia, Journal of the Australian Historical Association***, Volume 1, Number 2, July 2004

Caruana, Wally — ***Aboriginal Art***
New Edition, Thames & Hudson (World of Art), London 2003

Caruana, Wally & Lendon, Nigel (Eds) — ***The Painters of the Wagilag Story 1937-1997***
National Gallery of Australia, 1997

Casey, Dawn — *'Case Study: The National Museum of Australia – Keynote address from the Humanities and Social Sciences Summit 26-17 July 2001, Canberra'*
***Humanities Research***, Volume XIII, Issue 1 2001 (ANU)
www.anu.edu/hrc/publications /hr/issue 1_2001

Casey, Dawn — *'Nation of many stories: National Museum of Australia director Dawn Casey breaks her silence on the history wars'* ***Australian***, 6 October 2003

Cochrane, Peter — ***'Artists reign in town where there's nary a trickle'***
***The Sydney Morning Herald***_1 May 2003

Chapman, Christopher *'Two painters'*
***Portrait 26***, National Portrait Gallery, Summer 2007

Chapman, Christopher *'In the galleries'*
***Portrait 30,*** National Portrait Gallery, Summer 2008

Christopher, Lissa — *'The modern bible: 'The Home' magazine defined as era of Sydney style'*
***The Sydney Morning Herald***, 31 August 2006

Conrad, Peter — ***Tales of Two Hemispheres*** *(Boyer Lectures 2004)*
ABC Books, Sydney 2004

Cooke, Dr Lynne — '*10th Biennale of Sydney – Jurassic Technologies Revenant*' ***Look Magazine***, Art Gallery of New South Wales, July 1996

Corsi, Lisa — *Australian art on the international stage* ***The Australian Art Market Report***, Issue 17, Spring 2005

Coslovich, Gabriella — *'Green turtle dreaming'* ***The Age***, 17 May 2003

Coslovich, Gabriella — *'An art for blurring borders'* ***The Age,*** 1-2 January 2010

Côté, Michael — '*From Masterpiece to Artefact: the Sacred and the Profane in Museums'*, ***Museum International*** (Quarterly) Issue 2, September 2003 (edited by Isabelle Vinson) published on behalf of UNSESCI and the International Council of Museums

Creagh, Sunanda — '*Artist's bald honesty isn't a cardinal sin'* ***The Sydney Morning Herald*** 5 May 2005

Creagh, Sunanda — *'Blues are gone as burgeoning museum gets back in the black'*, ***The Sydney Morning Herald*** (Weekend Edition), 3-4 September 2005

Creagh, Sunanda — *'Curator takes a trip outside the comfort zone'* ***The Sydney Morning Herald***, March 1, 2006

Creagh, Sunanda — '*Many players, but there's only one Archibald'* ***The Sydney Morning Herald***, 7 March 2006

Creagh, Sunanda — '*Working-class man wins over the packers'* ***The Sydney Morning Herald***, 17 March 2006

Creagh, Sunanda — *'Portrait of the artist as a holed man wins the day'* ***The Sydney Morning Herald*** (Weekend Edition) 25-26 March 2006

Creagh, Sunanda — '*People's Choice shows depression is no laughing matter'* ***The Sydney Morning Herald***, 19 May 2006

Creagh, Sunanda — *'Native titles honoured half a world away'* ***The Sydney Morning Herald,*** 31 May 2006

Creagh, Sunanda — '*Record year for the Biennale – just check the figures'* ***The Sydney Morning Herald***, Friday, September 1, 2006

Croft, Brenda L. — '*Leaps and bounds – new directions in contemporary Indigenous art and culture'* ***Artonview,*** National Gallery of Australia, Issue No.31 Spring 2002

Croft, Brenda L. '*Albert's Gift*'
***Artonview***, National Gallery of Australia, Issue No.31 Spring 2002

Croft, Brenda L. '*Musée du quai Branly, Paris – Indigenous art commission from Australia*' ***Artonview,*** National Gallery of Australia, Issue No.41 Autumn 2005

Croft, Brenda L. 'Tribute:*Gabrielle Pizzi*' ***Artonview,*** National Gallery of Australia, Issue No.41 Autumn 2005

Croft, Brenda L. '*Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art*'
***Artonview,*** National Gallery of Australia, Issue No.45 Autumn 2006

Croft, Brenda L. '*Michael Riley: sights unseen (14 July – 16 October 2006)*'
***Artonview,*** National Gallery of Australia, Issue No 46 Winter 2006

Croft, Brenda L. '*Right here right now: Recent Aboriginal and Torres Strait acquisitions (13 May – 13 August 2006)*'
***Artonview,*** National Gallery of Australia, Issue No 46 Winter 2006

Croft, Brenda L. *'Tactility: Two Centuries of Indigenous Objects, Textiles and Fibre – Project Gallery, 7 June-28 September 2003*
***Artonview***, National Gallery of Australia, Issue No 46 Winter 2006

Croft, Brenda L. '*Culture Warriers: National Indigenous Art Triennial – No beginning, no middle, no end (13 October 2007 - 10 February 2008*' ***Artonview,***
National Gallery of Australia, Issue No.52 Summer 2007-08

Crombie, Isobel (Editor) ***Australian Art in the National Gallery of Victoria, 1790-2000***
The Ian Potter Centre, NGV Australia, Melbourne, 2000

Crompton, Sarah '*The arts column: why the past has a bright future*'
http://www.telegraph.co.uk/core/Content/displayPrintable.jhtml/xml=/arts/2003/08/27

Date, Margo '*New ways to paint the soul*'
***The Sydney Morning Herald*** 21 November 2006

Dean, David & Rider, Peter E. '*Museums, National and Political History in the Australian National Museum and the Canadian Museum of Civilization*'
***Museum and Society***, March 2005 Vol.3 No.1
http://www.le.ac.uk/ms/m&sframeset.html

Dedman, Roger *'Aboriginal art at auction'*,
***The Australian Art Market Report***, Issue 18 Summer 2005/2006

Delingpole James — *'What are museums for?'* The Charles Douglas-Home Memorial Trust Award 2005 ***Times Online*** March 17, 2006

Dennis, Anthony — *'Mailman people's top banana'* ***The Sydney Morning Herald*** 30 April 1999

Desmond, Michael — *'Is the truth of portraiture vested exclusively in likeness?'* ***Portrait 21,*** National Portrait Gallery, Spring 2006

Desmond, Michael — *'Seduce Amuse Entertain'* ***Portrait 26,*** National Portrait Gallery, Summer 2007

Desmond, Michael — *'Technical terminology'* ***Portrait 36,*** National Portrait Gallery, Winter 2010

Devine, Miranda — *'Why art is a dirty word'* ***The Sydney Morning Herald***, 11 August 2005

Dicks, Bella — *'Heritage, Governance and Marketization: a Case-study from Wales'* ***Museum and Society***, March 2003 Vol 1. No 1

Drewe, Robert — ***Desert-Seekers*** *(Review of Roslynn D. Hayes Seeking the Centre: The Australian Desert in Literature, Art and Film)* ***Australian Book Review***, Issue Number 208 February/March 1999 http://home.vicnet.net.au/-abr/FebMar99/dre.html (5 June 2003)

Dunn, Emily — *'Packer's brush paints a bold new canvas'* ***The Sydney Morning Herald***, 21 November 2006

Eagle, Mary — *'Between the bush and the boudoir: an exhibition of paintings, drawings and lithographs by artists of the Heidelberg School on show at the NGA until 22 September'* ***Look Magazine,*** Art Gallery of New South Wales, August 1996

Ebes, Hank & Hollows, Michael (Eds) — ***Modern Art – Ancient Icon: A Gallery of Dreamings from Aboriginal Australia*** The Aboriginal Gallery of Dreamings, Melbourne

Eccles, Jeremy — *'Musée du Quai Branly'* ***The Australian Art Review,*** Issue 9, November 2005-February 2006

Eccles, Jeremy — *15th Biennale of Sydney: 8 June - 27 August* ***The Australian Art Market Report***, Issue 21 Winter 2006

Eccles, Jeremy — *We now need a big-non-commercial show of living Aboriginal art in Paris to keep up the momentum* **The Australian Art Market Report**, Issue 23, Autumn 2007

Eccles, Jeremy — *'Overseas Sales of Australian Art: Where the bloody hell are they?'* **The Australian Art Market Report**, Issue 24 Winter 2007

Eccles, Jeremy — *'The Telstra effect'* **The Australian Art Market Report**, Issue 26 Summer 2007/2008

Eccles, Jeremy — *'Linking up the dots'* **The Australian Art Market Report**, Issue 28 Winter 2008

Edwards, Deborah — *'Portrait Sculpture – simultaneously the most artificial and the most 'real'* **Look Magazine,** Art Gallery of New South Wales, September 2003

Elliott, Tim — *'Two sides to a brush with fame'* **The Sydney Morning Herald** (Weekend Edition) 27 & 28 June 2010

Engledow, Sarah — *'Through blue eyes'* **Portrait 30,** National Portrait Gallery, Summer 2008

Ewington, Julie — 'Parallel Worlds: Two exhibitions of Indigenous Women's Fibre Art' **Art Monthly Australia**, Number 120, June 1999

Fagan, Julian — *'Uncommon Australians: Towards an Australian Portrait Gallery'* **Look Magazine,** Art Gallery of New South Wales, October 1992

Farrelly, Elizabeth — *'Treasure in the woolshed'* **The Sydney Morning Herald** (Weekend Edition) 7-8 January 2006

Farrelly, Elizabeth — *'Watch this space: Brutalism meets beauty in the National Gallery's ne wing'* **The Sydney Morning Herald**, (Weekend Edition, 9-10 October 2010

Fesq, Harriet — *'Are we at the end of the 'golden era' of Aboriginal art?'* **The Australian Art Market Report**, Issue 24, Winter 2007

Fesq, Harriet — *'Strokes of genius'* **The Australian Art Market Report**, Issue 29 Third Quarter 2008

Finlay, Elizabeth — *'The changing face of the scientist'* **Portrait.10**, National Portrait Gallery, Summer 2003

Finnane, Mark — *'Editorial'* **Continuum: The Australian Journal of Media & Culture** Vol. 3 No1 (1990)

Fortescue, Elizabeth *'I'd say it's a painting - What art expert told the Archibald judge'* ***The Daily Telegraph***, 31 May 2006

Fowler-Thomason, Emma '*Seeing the Centre: the travelling exhibition opens in Albert Namatjira's country*' ***Artonview,*** National Gallery of Australia, Issue No.32 Summer 2002-2003

French, Alison & Mollison, James '*Fred Williams: A Retrospective - An Australian National Gallery Travelling Exhibition'*
***Look Magazine,*** Art Gallery of New South Wales, August 1999

French, Alison '*Albert Namatjira: Seeing the Centre'*
Lecture at the Art Gallery of New South Wales, 28 May 2004

French, Alison ***Seeing the Centre: The Art of Albert Namatjira 1902-1959***
National Gallery of Australia, Canberra 2002

Frost, Andrew *'Let's wake up and get adventurous with the Archibald'*
***The Sydney Morning Herald***, 2 February 2009

Fry, Gavin '*Paint on the Tracks: Australian Artists on the Railway'*
***Look Magazine***, Art Gallery of New South Wales, May 1994

Fulton, Adam *'Biennale arts will reach the clouds'*
***The Sydney Morning Herald***, 11 February 2010

Fulton, Adam *'Portrait of a life lost wins critic's choice in the Head On awards'*
***The Sydney Morning Herald*** (Weekend Edition) 1-2 May 2010

Gale, Iain '*Welcome to the future of Museums'*
***Scotland on Sunday*** 30/4/06
http://living.scotsman.com/visual.cfm?id=543872006

Gablic, Suzi '*Report from Australia (Part 1)'*
***Art & Australia*** Volume 18 Number 3 Autumn 1981

Gaston, Vivien '*Faces in Dialogue: An Interview with Andrew Sayers'*
***Art & Australia,*** Volume 38 Number 3 (March-May 2001)

Gaunt, Ruth ***'****O Seas of the Imagination'*
***Bulletin*** *(with* ***Newsweek)*** 16th December 2003

Gibbons, Fiachra *'Musée des bogus arts'* ***The Guardian***, 3rd July 2006
"http://www.artsjournal.com/visualarts/redir/20060702-64837.html
3/7/2006

Gibson, Joel — *'Artists locked in 'battery farms', worker says'* **The Sydney Morning Herald,** 29 July 2008

Gibson, Moses — '*Culture Warriors on Tour*' ***Artonview,*** National Gallery of Australia, Issue No.54 Winter 2008

Gill, Raymond — *'Costs force gallery to take a day off'* ***The Sydney Morning Herald,*** 2 August 2005

Glancey, Jonathon — *'How does you gallery grow?'* ***The Guardian***, 26th June 2006 "http://www.guardian.co.uk/print/0..329512717-110633.00html"

Goad, Philip — *'Enfiade and Intrafilament – The Ian Potter Centre at Federation Square'* ***ABV42 Art Bulletin of Victoria*** (The Annual Journal of the Nationsl Gallery of Victoria, 2002)

Goldberg, Michael — '*Visions of Sydney: an artist's eye view of construction ethics in the Harbour city'* ***Look Magazine,*** Art Gallery of New South Wales, June 1999

Goldrick, Margaret — *'Ramshot Revisited – The Painter and Poet: Arthur Boyd and Peter Porte'*, ***Eureka Street***, July/August 1999

Goodman, David — *'Fear of circuses: founding the National Museum of Victoria'* ***Continuum: The Australian Journal of Media & Culture*** Vol. 3 No1 (1990) http://www.mcc.murdoch.edu.au/ReadingRoom/3.1/Goodman.html (3/06/05)

Gopnik, Blake — '*Seeking an American Essence in Art'* ***Washingtonpost.com***, Sunday 25 June 2006 http://www.artsjournal.com/visualarts/redir/20060626-64709.html (3/7/2006)

Gordon, David — '*Art? Or Entertainment? Maybe the answer is a little of both'* ***Milwaukee Journal – Sentinal,*** 25 June 2006 http://www.artsjournal.com/visualarts/redir/20060628-64772.html 3/7/2006)

Gore, James M. — *'Representations of Non-Indigenous History and Identity in the National Museum of Australia and Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa'* http://www.jcu.edu.au/aff/history/articles/gore.htm (30/10/2003)

Greer, Germaine — *'Whitefella Jump Up: The Shortest Way to Nationhood'* ***Quarterly Essay***, Issue 11 2003

Grishin, Sasha — *'Iconic portraits of a changing nation'* **The Canberra Times**, 2 December 2000

Grishin, Sasha — *'Australian Art at the National Gallery of Australia'* **The World of Antiques & Art**, February-July 2003

Grishin, Sasha — *'The rise and rise of the National Gallery of Australia'* **Art & Australia**, Volume 41, Number 2, Summer 2003

Hall, Louise — *'Cultures Explored: This year's Biennale will feature 85 of the world's most provocative artists in galleries across the city'* **The Sun Herald**, April 9 2006

Hallett, Bryce — *'All eyes on the prize job'* **The Sydney Morning Herald** (Weekend Edition) 13 & 14 March 2010

Hampson, Jane — *'Brush with the Bush'* **The Sun-Herald** (Timeout), 22 March 1998

Hampson, Jane — *'Under the influence: the work of Lloyd Reees and Brett Whiteley hang side-by-side in a new exhibition'* **Look Magazine,** Art Gallery of New South Wales, February 2001

Harling, Richard — *'Keeping up with Australia's Indigenous Art'* **Look Magazine,** Art Gallery of New South Wales, August 2004

Harper, Alison — *'Parochial push onto the national stage'* **The Australian Art Market Report**, Issue 16 Winter 2005

Harper, Alison — *'Black Art Goldrush'* **The Australian Art Market Report,** Issue 18 Summer 2005/2006

Hawley, Janet — *'The niece's story'.* **The Sydney Morning Herald** (The Good Weekend) 9 August 1997

Hawley, Janet — *'Arthur Boyd 1920-1999: Elusive genius of the gentle pixie'* **The Sydney Morning Herald**, 26 April 1999

Haygarth, Nic — *'Spurling's wild Tasmania'* **National Library of Australia News**, September 2004

Higson, Rosalie — *'Archibald portrait series a study in friendship'* **The Australian** 13 April 2005

Hill, Peter — *'Move with the times'* **The Sydney Morning Herald** (Weekend Edition) 5 & 6 June 2003

Hill, Peter — *'On their selection'* ***The Sydney Morning Herald*** (Weekend Edition) 18-19 October 2003

Hill, Peter — *'Sacred Realm: From the Monaro to middle America, with a detour through old-world China, the countryside has come to town'* ***The Sydney Morning Herald*** (Weekend Edition) 17-18 April 2004

Hill, Peter — *'Face Value'* ***The Sydney Morning Herald*** (Weekend Edition) 1-2 May 2004

Hill, Peter — *'Pleasure and pain: emotional, playful and intense, the Sydney Biennale offers a picture of Australian art at its international best'* ***The Sydney Morning Herald***, (Weekend Edition) 26-27 June, 2004

Hill, Peter — *'Spirit of the land: See a cosmic and still evolving story of country'* ***The Sydney Morning Herald***, (Weekend Edition) 30-31 October 2004

Hooper- Greenhill, Elieen — ***Museums and the Interpretation of Visual Culture*** Routledge. (London & New York) 2000

Hughes, Robert — *'A History (Forgotten)'* ***Reflections***, 1998 Issue 3

Hughes, Robert — ***The Art of Australia*** Penguin Books Australia, 1970 (Revised Edition)

Huxley, John — *'Artist's double-take casts new light on a tree-hugged harbour'* ***The Sydney Morning Herald*** (Weekend Edition,) 21-22 June 2003

Iaccarino, Clara — *'Artistic teenager thriving after emerging from early blue period'* ***The Sydney Morning Herald***, 10 November 2006

Iaccarino, Clara — *'Larger than life: portrait of a natural leader'* ***The Sydney Morning Herald*** (Weekend Edition) 3-4 February 2007

Iaccarino, Clara — *'A very big head gets the Archibald nod'* ***The Sydney Morning Herald***, 3 March 2007

Iaccarino, Clara — *'Venice, here come six of the best'* ***The Sydney Morning Herald***, 7 March 2007

Illeris, Helene — *'Museums and galleries as performative sites for lifelong learning: constructions, deconstructions and reconstructions of audience positions in museum and gallery education'* ***Museum and Society***, March 2006 Vol.4. No.1 http://www.le.ac.uk/ms/m&s/Issue2010/2%20Illeris.pdf (23/5/2006

Isaacs, Jennifer — *'1970-2001 International Exposure of Aboriginal Art'* ***Art & Australia***, Volume 39, Number 4, June to August 2002

Janofsky, Michael — '*Smithsonian Museums Reopen, Telling America's Story Through Ideas and Ideals'*, ***The New York Times***, 27 June 2006 http://www.artsjournal.com/visualarts/redir/20060626-64709.html (3/7/2006)

James, Bruce — '*The Archibald: it kind of grows on you'* ***The Sydney Morning Herald*** 27 March 1999

James, Bruce — **'***Thoroughly modern Clarice.* ***The Sydney Morning Herald***, 1 May 1999

Jenkins, Susan — '*Colour and Country: Aspects of the Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander art hang'* ***Artonview,*** National Gallery of Australia, Issue No.32, Summer 2002-2003

Jenkins, Susan — *'No ordinary place: the art of David Malangi'*, ***Artonview,*** National of Gallery of Australia, Issue No.38, Winter 2004

Jensen, Erik — *'Donation of $6.6m for Australian art is unreal'* ***The Sydney Morning Herald***, 28 September 2007

Jinman, Richard — '*Face that beat them all – by more than just a nose'* ***The Sydney Morning Herald*** 16 May 2003

Jinman, Richard — *'You don't have to understand the Biennale of Sydney, says curator Isabel Carlos, just feel a reaction – any reaction'* ***The Sydney Magazine*** *(Issue No.14),* ***The Sydney Morning Herald****, June 2004*

Jinman, Richard — *'Mirror Mirror'* ***The Sydney Morning Herald*** (Weekend Edition) 28-29 January 2006

Jinman, Richard — '*Street art moves to a posh new hang-out'* ***The Sydney Morning Herald,*** 9 April 2007

Jinman, Richard — *'National Gallery to hold indigenous art triennial'* ***The Sydney Morning Herald***, 19 April 2007

Johnson, Vivien — *'Painted Dreams - the money belongs to the ancestors'* ***Look Magazine,*** Art Gallery of New South Wales, December 1995/January 1996

Johnson, Vivien — ***Michael Jagamara Nelson*** Craftsman House, Sydney 1997

Johnson, Vivien — ***Clifford Possum Tjapaltjarri***
Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide 2003

Jones, Jonathon — '*The truth about those mega-exhibitions: the best works are absent, the curator has an axe to grind and you'll learn nothing about the artist'*
***The Guardian***, 2 January, 2001

Jones, Jonathon — *'Boomali: To make a mark/Strike back/Light up'*
***Look Magazine***, Art Gallery of New South Wales, September 2007

Keenan, Catherine — '*Seeing double in a tailor-made space'*
***The Sydney Morning Herald,*** 4 December 2008

Kaldor, John
Thomas, Daniel &
Fineberg, Jonathon — ***An Australian Accent: Three Artists – Mike Parr, Imants Tillers, Ken Unsworth***, *Project Studios One –The Institute for Art and Urban Resources (John Kaldor Art Project 7) PSI New York 1984*
Published by John Kaldor, Sydney 1984

Keenan, Catherine — *'An outsider joins the dots'*
***The Sydney Morning Herald***, (Weekend Edition) 28-29 August 2010

Kelly, Paul — '*Child of the Empire*' ***The Weekend Australian***, 10-11/03/2001

Kent, Ellen — '*A handful of sand'*
***Portrait.24*** Winter 2007, National Portrait Gallery

Kerr, Joan — *'The possibilities of a National Portrait Gallery'*
***Art Monthly Australia***, Number 118, April 1999

Kerr, Joan — '*Artless History or the spectacular results of Centenary of Federation funding'* ***Art Monthly Australia***, Number 148, April 2002

Kidd, Courtney — *'Telstra Award: Continuing Change in this National* Prize'
***Look Magazine,*** Art Gallery of New South Wales, November 2006

Kimball, Roger — '*The Museum as fun house'*
***The New Criterion***, February 2001 Volume 19 No 6

Kohen, Apolline — '*Rarrk that trails the world',*
***Australian Art Review,*** Issue 09, November 2005-February 2006

Kolenberg, Hendrik — *'Lloyd Rees - The Last Frontier'*
***Look Magazine,*** Art Gallery of New South Wales, July 1989

Kolenberg, Hendrik — *'The Portrait and the Nude: Australian Drawings from the Collection'*
***Look Magazine,*** Art Gallery of New South Wales, August 1990

Kolenberg, Hendrik *'Completing the Picture: Women artists and the Heidelberg Era'* ***Look Magazine,*** Art Gallery of New South Wales, March 1992

Kolenberg, Hendrik *'Lloyd Rees Drawings – Centenary Retrospective'* ***Look Magazine,*** Art Gallery of New South Wales, March 1995

Kolenberg, Hendrik *'Australian Prints from the Collection: 139 of the best'* ***Look Magazine***, Art Gallery of New South Wales, November 1998

Kolenberg, Hendrik *'Australian Images from the Past; Whether rarely seen or familiar, these works move and delight us'* ***Look Magazine***, Art Gallery of New South Wales, April 2005

Koltun, Lilly *'Canadian Identities: National identity in the Canadian context'* ***Portrait 14***, National Portrait Gallery, Summer 2005

Lane, Terence *'The Ian Potter Centre: NGV Australia at Federation Square'* ***The World of Antiques & Art***, February-July 2003

Lane, Terence ***Australian Impressionism*** National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, 2007

Lansell, Ross *'Australian Art Scene in the 1970s'* ***Art in Australia***, Volume 18, No.2, Summer 1980

Lawley, Ian *'Local authority museums and the modernizing government agenda in England'* ***Museums and Society***, July 2003 Vol. 1 No 2

Lawson, Valerie *'Life after Brian'* ***The Sydney Morning Herald*** (Weekend Edition) 17-18 July 2004

Lawson, Valerie *'A quiet beginning –It has been a year since Ron Radford took over the reins of the National Gallery of Australia and the challenges remain daunting'* ***The Sydney Morning Herald****, 20 December 2005*

Lawson, Valerie *'Archibald and me'* ***The Sydney Morning Herald*** (Weekend Edition) 25-26 March 2006

Lord, Beth *'Foucalt's museum: difference, representation, and genealogy'* ***Museum and Society,*** March 2006, Vol.4. No.1 http://www.le.ac.uk/ms/m&s/issue%2010/19620Lord.pdf (23/5/06)

Low, Lenny Ann *'Please, just walk all over what I consider art'* ***The Sydney Morning Herald***, 4 June 2004

Low, Lenny Ann — *'New Mr Big plans to expand Biennale's horizons'* **The Sydney Morning Herald**, 29 June, 2004

Low, Lenny Ann — *'MCA seeks a small but perfectly formed collection'* **The Sydney Morning Herald**, 12 November 2004

Low, Lenny Ann — *'For sale: young artists find their work difficult to shift'* **The Sydney Morning Herald**, 2 December 2004

Lloyd, Clem & Sekulis, Peter — ***Australia's National Collections*** Cassell Australia Ltd, Sydney/Melbourne 1980

Lynn, Victoria — *'Abstraction in Australia'* **Look Magazine**, Art Gallery of New South Wales, May 1990

Lynn, Victoria — *'Pushing back the boundaries – the 1991 'Australian Perspecta' exhibition'* **Look Magazine**, Art Gallery of New South Wales, August 1991

Lynn, Victoria — *'The Weird and the Wonderful – Australian Perspecta 1993'* **Look Magazine**, Art Gallery of New South Wales, October 1993

Lynn, Victoria — *'Australian Perspecta 1997 – Between Art & Nature'* **Look Magazine**, Art Gallery of New South Wales, August 1997

Macdonald, Sharon — *'Museums, national, postnational and transcultural identities'* **Museum and Society**, March 2003 Vol. 1. No.1

Macgregor, Elizabeth Ann — *'What is Contemporary Art – and does it really matter?'* **The Regional Galleries Summit, Mildura**. 19 April 2001

Macgregor, Elizabeth Ann — *'Art, too, is important to our identity'* **The Sydney Morning Herald**, 31 October 2006

Maloon, Terence — *'Australia, Art and the West'* **Look Magazine**, Art Gallery of New South Wales, April 1987

Marr, David — *'The best reason to visit Canberra...and there's more to come'* **The Sydney Morning Herald,** 1 October 2010

Martin, Lauren — *'Nature's Bounties celebrated, in five metres of artistic mastery'* **The Sydney Morning Herald**, 13 October 2003

Martin, Lauren — *'Praise and scorn for the Irishman'* **The Sydney Morning Herald**, 4 June 2004

Martin, Lauren — *'Portraits of artists as themselves'* **The Sydney Morning Herald**, 10 July 2004

Martin, Lauren — *'Gallery door saga near to closing'*, **The Sydney Morning Herald** (Weekend Edition) 28-29 August 2004

Martin, Lauren — *'Smiles all round for gallery boss'* **The Sydney Morning Herald**, 1 September 2004

Martin, Lauren — *'A red dot for Ron'*, **The Sydney Morning Herald** (Weekend Edition) 4-5 September 2004

Martin, Lauren — *'From the comfort zone to the hot seat'* **The Sydney Morning Herald**, 29 September 2004

Martin, Lauren — *'Portrait gallery, film feature in arts plan'* **The Sydney Morning Herald** 5 October 2004

Martin, Lauren — *'Face of the nation eyes a lakeside address'* **The Sydney Morning Herald** 14 October 2004

Martin, Lauren — *'Soul of a nation prepares to spread its wings'* **The Sydney Morning Herald**, 14 October 2004

Martin, Lauren — *'New Direction: Director Ron Radford is set to inject new life into the National Gallery of Australia'* **The Sydney Morning Herald**, 15 October 2004

Martin, Lauren — *'Joint custody gets a new framework –An increasing number of galleries are sharing the high cost of great works* **The Sydney Morning Herald**, 10 November 2004

Martin, Lauren — *'Windows to the soul of the outback'* **The Sydney Morning Herald,** 19 November 2004

Martin, Lauren — *'Photographer paints portraits of the artists'*, **The Sydney Morning Herald** (Weekend Edition) 4-5 December 2004

Martin, Lauren — *'An entrance, an exit but doubts on children's gallery'* **The Sydney Morning Herald**, 25 May 2005

Martin, Lauren — *'Kylie, cheek by jowl with the masterpieces'* **The Sydney Morning Herald,** 13 May 2005

Martin, Lauren — *'Gallery declined offer of collection'* **The Sydney Morning Herald**, 26 May 2005

Martin, Lauren '*What do you mean that it doesn't look like him?*' ***The Sydney Morning Herald*** 6 July 2005

Martin, Lauren '*Dreaming of a gallery that shows pride of place*' ***The Sydney Morning Herald*** 14 July 2005

Martin, Lauren *'Sell off Telstra, then show me the Monet'* ***The Sydney Morning Herald***, 13 October 2005

Martin, Lauren *'The big picture: out with old masters, in with new'* ***The Sydney Morning Herald***, 13 October 2005

Martin, Lauren *'Gallery defiant over redesign'* ***The Sydney Morning Herald***, 19 October 2005

Martin, Lauren '*Outback chic: humble woolshed inspires new gallery*' ***The Sydney Morning Herald*** 8 December 2005

Martin-Chew, Louise '*William Robinson Retrospective: An Individual Vision Traverses Darkness and Light*', ***Art & Australia*** Volume 39 Number 4 Winter 2002

Mascarenhas, Alan '*Old spooky eyes wins – but who wants to paint a billionaire*' ***The Sydney Morning Herald*** 1 April 2004

Masien, Geoffrey *'Auction windfall brings art crown back to Sydney'* ***The Sydney Morning Herald***, 6 March 2003

Masien, Geoffrey '*Sotheby's Auction that turned into a Lloyd Rees BOGOF Sale*' ***The Sydney Morning Herald***, 29 May 2003

Masien, Geoffrey '*Paintings line up for redundancy*' ***The Sydney Morning Herald***, 15 July, 2003

Masien, Geoffrey '*Hammer and tongs*' ***The Sydney Morning Herald***, 17 March 2004

Mason, Rhiannon '*Nation Building at the Museum of Welsh Life*' ***Museum and Society***, March 2005 Vol.3 No.1

McDonald, John (et alia) '*Federation: Australian Art and Society 1901-2001*', ***Artonview***, National Art Gallery of Australia, Canberra Summer 2000-2001

McDonald, John *'An art critic's retrospective: Reflecting on 16 years as a critic, the new head of Australian art at the National Gallery fires a parting shot at painters with bloated egos and curators without taste'* ***The Sydney Morning Herald***, 3 June 1999

McDonald, John *'Bloodless coup'*
***The Sydney Morning Herald*** (Weekend Edition), 9-10 April 2005

McDonald, John '*Frame and fortune'*
***The Sydney Morning Herald*** (Weekend Edition) 16-17 April 2005

McDonald, John *'Portrait of the prize'* ***The Sydney Morning Herald*** (Weekend Edition), 30 April-1 May 2005

McDonald, John *'Hanging offences'*
***The Sydney Morning Herald*** (Weekend Edition) 7-8 May 2005

McDonald, John '*Masters and Servants: Dutch Masters from the Rijkmuseum, Amsterdam, National Gallery of Victoria until October 2'* ***The Sydney Morning Herald*** (Weekend Edition) 13-14 August 2005

McDonald, John *'Comment: Vision without the va va voom'*
***The Sydney Morning Herald***, 13 October 2005

McDonald, John *'Isn't it ironic?'* ***The Sydney Morning Herald***
(Weekend Edition) 15-16 October 2005

McDonald, John *'Reflections on us'* ***The Sydney Morning Herald***
(Weekend Edition) 22-23 October, 2005

McDonald, John ***'A Crowd of Faces' The Sydney Morning Herald***
(Weekend Edition) 25-26 February 2006

McDonald, John *'Archibald Prize: Year of the very big head'*
***The Sydney Morning Herald***, 17 March 2006

McDonald, John *'Trustees win the prize for best joke'* ***The Sydney Morning Herald***
(Weekend Edition) 25-26 March 2006

McDonald, John *'It's like a sausage factory'* ***The Sydney Morning Herald***,
(Weekend Edition) 1-2 April 2006

McDonald, John *'How to reconcile business and art: Though the 2006 Biennale of Sydney is full of political posturing, it is still possible to find works of breathtaking imagination'*
***The Sydney Morning Herald*** (Weekend Edition) 17-18 June, 2006

McDonald, John '*New dreaming may not live up to expectations'*
***The Sydney Morning Herald***, 20 June 2006

McDonald, John *'Revelations in the dark: black humour and bleak narratives have made faux rebellious political art the viewer's penance'* ***The Sydney Morning Herald*** (Weekend Edition) 24-26 June, 2006

McDonald, John *'Voila, the art of reconciliation: Jacques Chirac's monument to indigenous art and culture is impressive but Australia's input may be overstated'.* ***The Sydney Morning Herald*** (Weekend Edition) 1-2 July 2006

McDonald, John *'In a good year for bad painting, judges play it safe'* ***The Sydney Morning Herald***, 3 March 2007

McDonald, John *'A brush with mediocrity'* ***The Sydney Morning Herald***, (Weekend Edition) 10-11 March 2007

McDonald, John *'Anything goes in the silly season'* ***The Sydney Morning Herald***, (Weekend Edition) 24-25 March 2007

McDonald, John *'Impressions from the edge'* ***The Sydney Morning Herald*** (Weekend Edition) 19-20 May 2007

McDonald, John *'The 2008 Archibald Prize'* ***The Sydney Morning Herald***, 15 March 2008

McDonald, John *'The humour in a brush with fame'* ***The Sydney Morning Herald,*** (Weekend Edition) 5-6 April 2008

McDonald, John *'Hanging offences'* ***The Sydney Morning Herald***, (Weekend Edition) 7-8 May 2008

McDonald, John *'Cravin' images: Collectors buy art not just for personal pleasure but also for others to enjoy'* ***The Sydney Morning Herald*** (Weekend Edition) 26-27 July 2008

McDonald, John *'Gloomy tale of cultural failure: The story of modernism in Australia is as much about neglect as it is about celebration (Modern Times: The Untold Story of Modernism in Australia, Powerhouse Museum, until February 15)'* ***The Sydney Morning Herald*** (Weekend Edition) 18-19 October, 2008

McDonald, John *'A step beyond the hall of fame'* ***The Sydney Morning Herald***, (Weekend Edition) 13-14 December 2008

McDonald, John *'Trash or treasure- To Make a Work of Timeless Art: MCA Primavera acquisitions"* ***The Sydney Morning Herald*** (Weekend Edition), 17-18 January 2009

McDonald, John *'The colours of democracy'* ***The Sydney Morning*** Weekend Edition) 7-8 March 2009

McDonald, John *'Big heads aplenty, and judges not sticking their necks out'* ***The Sydney Morning Herald***, 24 February 2009

McDonald, John *'When losers are winners'* ***The Sydney Morning Herald***, (Weekend Edition) 14-15 March 2009

McDonald, John *'Preaching to the converted: An indigenous artist uses simple, striking images and a macabre sense of humour to make her political points'* ***The Sydney Morning Herald***, (Weekend Edition) 9-10 January 2010

McDonald, John *'Haunting images of a vast, dry land: The work of a great Australian artist with an apocalyptic vision is as relevant today as it was more than 60 years ago'* ***The Sydney Morning Herald*** (Weekend Edition) 13 – 14 February 1010

McDonald, John *'Boom and bust: The nation's attempts to engage China on a cultural level bring mixed results'* ***The Sydney Morning Herald***, (Weekend Edition) 9-10 October 2010

McDonald, John *'Too much of a good thing: It's hard to fully appreciate a magnificent collection in its new, rather crowded home'* ***The Sydney Morning Herald*** (Weekend Edition) 23-24 October 2010

McDonald, Patricia *'The Australia/Japan Connection: A major survey of Australian painting on show in Japan'* ***Look Magazine,*** Art Gallery of New South Wales, June 1992

McFarlane, Robert *'From the sublime to the everyday'* ***The Sydney Morning Herald***, 21 May 2003

McFarlane, Robert *'Stares and whispers'* ***The Sydney Morning Herald*** (Weekend Edition) 19 March 2004

McFarlane, Robert *'Beyond fashion to fine portraiture'* ***The Sydney Morning Herald***, 20 April 2004

McFarlane, Robert *'Red carpet treatment, but not for the bride'* ***The Sydney Morning Herald***, 5 April 2005

McFarlane, Robert *'Diverse Portraits with a chilly edge'* ***The Sydney Morning Herald***, 3 May 2005

McFarlane, Robert *'Plenty of surprises in the prizes'* ***The Sydney Morning Herald***, 4 April 2006

McFarlane, Robert '*From head to toe, in varied styles'* ***The Sydney Morning Herald***, 24 April 2007

McKenny, Leesha '*Meet the Mr Big of indigenous art'* ***The Sydney Morning Herald***, 30 July 2008

McIlveen, Luke '*Moran goes face-to-face on Archibald'* ***The Australian*** 2 April 2003

McLean, Fiona '*Guest Editorial: Museums and National Identity'* ***Museum and Society***, March 2005 Vol. 3 No.1 http://www.le.ac.uk/ms/m&sframeset.html

McLean, Ian *'Postcolonial Traffic: William Kentridge and Aboriginal Desert Painters'* ***Third Text***, Volume 17, Issue 3, 2003, Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group (http://www.tandf.vo.uk/journals)

Meacham, Steve *'A society's progress, in each frame'* ***The Sydney Morning Herald***, 9 March 2004

Meacham, Steve *'Hang the expense: What was once the province of the wealthy and the dead has become one of our great cultural success stories'* ***The Sydney Morning Herald*** (Weekend Edition) 24-25 May 2003

Meacham, Steve '*Scene, not heard: Pretentious or progressive? This art is sure to provoke reaction'* ***The Sydney Morning Herald,*** (Weekend Edition) 12-13 June 2004

Meacham, Steve '*Art experts ponder why White knew what he liked'*, ***The Sydney Morning Herald*** (Weekend Edition), 4-5 September 2004

Meacham, Steve ***'****Paintings that find words for the land'* ***The Sydney Morning Herald***, 13 October 2004

Meacham, Steve *'Mr Ed'* ***The Sydney Morning Herald (The Sydney Magazine,*** Issue No.19 November 2004)

Meacham, Steve *'Search for the Archibald's missing Elink draws a blank'*, ***The Sydney Morning Herald*** (Weekend Edition) 2-3 July 2005

Meacham, Steve '*The accidental Australian'*, ***The Sydney Morning Herald*** (Weekend Edition), 3-4 September 2005

Meacham, Steve — *'Radford vision off to a sexy start'* ***The Sydney Morning Herald***, 1 September 2006

Meacham, Steve — *'Hanging in the balance',* ***The Sydney Morning Herald*** (Weekend Edition), 23-24 September 2006

Meacham. Steve — *'Art prizes just a lot of old Archibalds'* ***The Sydney Morning Herald***, 8 September 2006

Meacham, Steve — *'When she was appointed director of the MCS, Elizabeth Macgregor took on a difficult beast. IS Sydney's contemporary art champion winning the battle?* ***The Sydney Morning Herald (The Sydney Magazine***, Issue No 53, September 2007*)*

Meacham, Steve — *'Fine art of one-upmanship: $10m for gallery'* ***The Sydney Morning Herald***, 30 August 2007

Meacham, Steve — *'Picture this'* ***The Sydney Morning Herald*** (Weekend Edition) 23-24 February 2008

Meacham, Steve — *'Papunya Painting: Out of the desert' (Special Promotion)* ***The Sydney Morning Herald*** (Weekend Edition), 28-29 June 2008

Meacham, Steve — *'Old horizons abandoned, and guilt dismissed'* ***The Sydney Morning Herald***, 6 February 2009

Message, Kylie — *'The shock of the renewed modern: MoMa 2004'* ***Museum and Society***, March 2006 Vol.4 No.1 http://www.le.ac.uk/ms/m&s/issue%2010/3%20message/pdf (23/5/06)

Millner, Jacqueline — *'Curating Australia for the Centenary of Federation'* ***Continuum: Journal of Media & Cultural Studies*** Vol. 16, No 1 2002 (ISSN 1030-4212 print/ISSN 1469-366 6 online/02/010041-12 © 2002 Taylor & Francis Ltd DOI: 10.1080/1030431022012096 6) Carfax Publishing, (Taylor & Francis Group)

Missingham, Hal — *'Obituary: Sir Russell Drysdale'* ***Art & Australia*** Volume 19 No 2 Summer 1981

Moran, Rod — *'Paradigm of the Postmodern Museum'* ***Quadrant*** No 383 Vol. XLVI Number 1-2, January-February 2002

Morrell, Timothy — *'Creating Australia: The Great Australian Art Exhibition'* ***Look Magazine,*** Art Gallery of New South Wales, October 1988

Morgan, Clare — *'Van vision came during rural odyssey'* **The Sydney Morning Herald**, 30 July 2003

Morgan, Clare — *'Gallery sells off the family silver and strikes gold'* **The Sydney Morning Herald**, 21 December 2004

Morgan, Clare — *'Blokey Bill gets a kiss from the packing room'* **The Sydney Morning Herald**, 22 April 2005

Morgan, Clare — *'Retro style: Olsen wins the Archibald with Janus on side''* **The Sydney Morning Herald** 30 April 2005

Morgan, Clare — *'Real recognition – Harding's portrait is people's pick'* **The Sydney Morning Herald**, 22 June 2005

Morgan, Clare — *'Portrait of the artist as the favourite'* **The Sydney Morning Herald**, 21 March 2006

Morgan, Clare — *'New portrait gallery head thinks virtual'* **The Sydney Morning Herald**, 27 August 2010

Morgan, Joyce — *'It's the art of financing'* **The Sydney Morning Herald**, 1 May 1999

Morgan, Joyce — *'Still life with Kennedy: A report on problems with Australia's flagship cultural institution has far-reaching consequences'* **The Sydney Morning Herald**, 26 May 2003

Morgan, Joyce — *'All credit to the gallery for $7000,000 Drysdale; now there'll be a collection'*, **The Sydney Morning Herald**, 2 June 2003

Morgan, Joyce — *'Archibald's little sister drawn out of the shadows'* **The Sydney Morning Herald**, 12 September 2003

Morgan, Joyce & Martin, Lauren — *'Hopes for end to gallery's days of thunder'* **The Sydney Morning Herald**, 10 February 2004

Morgan, Joyce — *'Enter at your own risk'* **The Sydney Morning Herald** (Weekend Edition) 6 & 7 March 2004

Morgan, Joyce — *'Only regulation will stop shonks'* **The Sydney Morning Herald**, 30 July 2008

Morgan, Joyce — *'Portrait of our times'*, **The Sydney Morning Herald** (Weekend Edition), 4 -5 October 2008

Morphy, Howard — *'Seeing Aboriginal Art in the Gallery'* ***Humanities Research – Museums of the Future Part 1,*** Volume VIII, Number 1, 2001 http:/www.anu.edu.au/hrc/publications/hr/issue1_2001/article05.hm (23/10/2003 )

Morris, Andy — '*Redrawing the boundaries: questioning the geographies of Britishness at Tate-Britain'* ***Museum and Society***, November 2003 Vol.1 No.3

Morris, Linda — *'Why blockbusters are part of the bigger picture'* ***The Sydney Morning Herald***, 4 December 2009

Moses, Alex — *'Primavera takes on a new sheen after casting its net wide'* ***The Sydney Morning Herald***, 24 May 2005

Mundine, John — *'Developing an Aboriginal Art Collection'* ***Look Magazine,*** Art Gallery of New South Wales, March 1988

Munroe, Kelsey — *'The odd angry shot: Wildness documents the lives of two Tasmanian photographers whose environmental zeal helped save some of Australia's most precious natural resources'* ***Limelight*** (ABC) August 2003

Murphy, Bernice — *'A critic's contempt for the contemporary'* ***The Sydney Morning Herald***, 4 June 1999

Murphy, Damien — *'Fight at the Museum: Its embattled director denies the Powerhouse is running out of puff'* ***The Sydney Morning Herald*** (Weekend Edition) 23-24 October 2010

Musa, Helen — *'Time for a McFeast: not quite showbiz but it's close – John McDonald has cooked up an exhibition as entertaining as it is iconoclastic'* ***The Canberra Times,*** 2 December, 2000

Nairne, Sandy — '*Why do painted portraits still matter?'* ***Portrait 20***, National Portrait Gallery, Winter 2006

Narushima, Yuko — *'Made in Australia: indigenous art takes outback to China*; ***The Sydney Morning Herald***, 19 May 2010

Neales, Sue — *'Art Direction: It may not be grabbing the headlines anymore, but the Aboriginal art market is booming – so much so, that a subtle power shift is afoot as increasing numbers of collectors go to the source to secure the best work'* ***Australian Financial Review*** (AFR Magazine), 25 June 2004

Neill, Rosemary — '*Cultures reign on the Seine'* ***The Australian***, Tuesday 12 October 2004

Neville, Richard *'Face to Face with the Past: Portraits and portrait galleries'* ***Look Magazine,*** Art Gallery of New South Wales, July 1992

Nicoll, Fiona *'White Aborigines: identity politics in Australian art'* ***Postcolonial Studies,*** Vol. 3, No. 1, pp 111-117, 2000 (1368-8790 Print/1466-1888 On-line/00/010111-07 © 2000) The Institute of Postcolonial Studies

Nisbet, Connell 'From walls to screens – Digitising the Gallery's collection' ***Look Magazine***, Art Gallery of New South Wales, October 2002

Nisbet, Connell *'Tracking the Spirit of Inventiveness from the Rocks and Trees of Western Arnhem Land to the Walls of the AGNSW'* ***Look Magazine,*** Art Gallery of New South Wales, September 2004

Nisbet, Connell *'On reason and Emotion: a Biennale to make us think and feel* ***Look Magazine***, Art Gallery of New South Wales, May 2004

Nisbet, Connell *'When the Archibald comes to town'* ***Look Magazine,*** Art Gallery of New South Wales, May 2005

Nunn, Louise *'Gulpilil caught in the great divide'* ***The Advertiser*** *(Adelaide)* 30 March 2004

O'Brien, Geraldine *'Lantern lights up gallery's Asian space'* ***The Sydney Morning Herald***, 6 June 2003

O'Brien, Geraldine *'Australia's Indigenous Art: Success breeds exploitation – and now ideas to improve artist's lives'* ***Look Magazine,*** Art Gallery of New South Wales, July 2006

Paroissien, Leon *'The Biennale of Sydney: a partisan view of three decades'* ***Art & Australia****, Volume 41 Number 1 Spring* 2003

Partington, Geoffrey 'The National Identity of Australia' http://www.norepublic.com.au/essays/Essay_National_Identity.htm#Headtitle (3/6/2005)

Patrick, Peggy *'Landscape inside out: Painting means to us country – that's why people paint'* ***Look Magazine,*** Art Gallery of New South Wales, February 2003

Pearce, Barry *'Sydney and the Heidelberg School'* ***Look Magazine,*** Art Gallery of New South Wales, February 1986

Pearce, Barry *'Building the Australian Collection'* ***Look Magazine***, Art Gallery of New South Wales, June 1986

Pearce, Barry — *'Celebrating Australian Art: The Joseph Brown Collection'* ***Look Magazine***, Art Gallery of New South Wales, May 1989

Pearce, Barry — *'Louis Buvelot – Grandfather of Australian Landscape Painting: major gift joins the collection'* ***Look Magazine***, Art Gallery of New South Wales, October 1993

Pearce, Barry — *'A Kind of Mystical Sanctity: William Robinson Triptych – the Latest Society Gift to the Gallery'* ***Look Magazine,*** Art Gallery of New South Wales, April 1995

Pearce, Barry — *'The Archibald Prize: 75 Years of Judgement of Australian Portraits'* ***Look Magazine,*** Art Gallery of New South Wales, April 1996

Pearce, Barry & Kolenberg, Hendrik — ***William Dobell: The Painter's Progress*** Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney 1997

Pearce, Barry — *'Orpheus of the art world'* ***The Sydney Morning Herald***, 29 May 1999

Pearce, Barry (Ed) — ***Australian Art in the Art Gallery of New South Wales*** Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney 2000

Pearce, Barry — *'Beyond Icons: There is more to 20th Century Australian art then the rise and fall of Modernism, as the Gallery's collection reveals'* ***Look Magazine***, Art Gallery of New South Wales, May 2001

Pearce, Barry — *'Parallel Visions: Twenty-Two Artists from the Australian Collection, 22 February 2002 - February 2003'* (Exhibition publication/brochure) Art Gallery of New South Wales

Pearce, Barry — *'Parallel Visions: A study of felloe spirits in Australian art'* ***Look Magazine***, Art Gallery of New South Wales, February 2002

Pearce, Barry — ***Sidney Nolan: 1917-1992*** Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney 2007

Pearce, Barry — ***PARALLELVISIONS: Works from the Australian Collection*** Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney

Perkin, Corrie — *'The power of one'*, ***Gallery***, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, January/February 2004

Perkins, Hetti — *'Aboriginal Women Artists Speaking for Themselves: The Contemporary Aboriginal Women's Art exhibition'* ***Look Magazine***, Art Gallery of New South Wales, September 1991

Perkins, Hetti — *'Aboriginal Art Acquisitions'* ***Look Magazine,*** Art Gallery of New South Wales, August 1993

Perkins, Hetti — *'Singular symbolism'*, ***Look Magazine***, Art Gallery of New South Wales, December 2002/January 2003

Perkins, Hetti — *'Landscape inside out – True Stories, Art of the East Kimberley'* ***Look Magazine,*** Art Gallery of New South Wales, February 2003

Perkins, Hetti — *'Aboriginal Art on the Walls of Paris'* ***Look Magazine***, Art Gallery of New South Wales, June 2006

Perkins, Hetti — '*One Sun One Moon: New book on Indigenous art offers a view from within'* ***Look Magazine,*** Art Gallery of New South Wales, June 2007

Perkins, Hetti & Watson, Ken — *'Bushfire at Warlugulong'* ***Look Magazine***, Art Gallery of New South Wales, May 1999

Perkins, Hetti & Watson, Ken — *'Yirbana: A Facelift and a New Show'* ***Look Magazine***, Art Gallery of New South Wales, July 2005

Pheasant, Bill — '*Grim days are lifting for Aboriginal artists'* ***Australian Financial Review*** 18th July 2003

Pierse, Simon — *'Recent Australian Painting: Australian artists in London in 1961'* ***Art in Australia,*** Volume 42, Number 2 Summer 2004

Pinchbeck, Cara — *'Aboriginal treasures'* ***Look Magazine*** Art Gallery of New South Wales, March 2009

Porter, Jeni — *'Black dreaming takes wing in France'* ***The Sydney Morning Herald***, 19 July 2005

Powis, Mary — *Prize stirs debate – yet again* ***The North Shore Times/Mosman Daily*** April 2003

Prunster, Ursula — '*My Story, My Country: Aboriginal Art and the Land'* ***Look Magazine,*** Art Gallery of New South Wales, July 1992

Prunster, Ursula — '*Image and Identity: The perennial question of Australian identity features in the Gallery's 2001 lecture series'*, ***Look Magazine***, Art Gallery of New South Wales, December 2000/January 2001

Radford, Ron — *'Paintings and Sculpture'* ***Art & Australia***, Volume 19, Number 1, Spring 1981

Radford, Ron — ***Modern Australian Women: paintings & prints 1925-1945*** Art Gallery of South Australia, 2000

Radford, Ron — '*Vision for the National Gallery of Australia: Part Two*' ***Artonview,*** National Gallery of Australia, Issue No.45 Autumn 2006

Radford, Ron — ***Ocean to Outback: Australian Landscape Painting 1850-1950*** National Gallery of Australia, Canberra 2007

Reid, Michael — *'Aboriginal Art'* ***The Australian Art Market Report,*** Issue 8 Winter 2003

Reid, Michael — ***How to Buy and Sell Art*** Allen & Unwin, Sydney 2004

Robinson, Cathy, Baker, Richard & Liddle, Lynette — '*Journeys through an Australian Sacred Landscape*' ***Museums International*** (Quarterly) Volume 55, Issue 2, September 2003

Robotham, Julie — *'Slip, slop, slap that paint on: A sunburnt country makes Australian art only skin deep for some'* ***The Sydney Morning Herald***, 21 May 2003

Rothwell, Nicolas — *'Silence and Slow Time'* ***The Weekend Australian***, 10-11 May, 2008

Ross, Max — '*Interpreting the New Museology*' ***Museum and Society***, July 2004 Volume 2 No 2

Ross, Peter — ***Let's Face It: The History of the Archibald Prize - The Archibald Story,*** Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney 1999

Rowley, Stephen — '*Australian Cinema and National Identity*' (© 1998) http://home.pacific.net.au/~satadaca/australi.htm (30/06/2005)

Rudd, Kevin — *'An Australian Story'* ***Portrait 31***, National Portrait Gallery, Autumn 2009

Russell, Katherine — *Inspiration + Realisation* ***Portrait 20,*** National Portrait Gallery, Winter 2006,

Russell, Roslyn — '*Commemorating the Nation in the National Library of Australia*' ***National Library of Australia News***, July 2005

Ryan, Judith — *'Empathy brought art to the world'* ***The Sydney Morning Herald***, 16 May 2003

Safe, Georgina — *'Kennedy calls time on tenure at gallery'* ***The Australian,*** 10 February 2004

Saltz, Jerry — *'Floundering: Are biennals too big, baggy, sluggish and bureaucratic? Reflect the state of art?'* (http://www.villagevoice.com/generic/show_print.pp?id=65589&page=saltz&issue=()...)

Sandell, Richard — '*Social inclusion, the museum and the dynamic of sectoral change'* ***Museum and Society***, March 2003 Vol 1 No 1

Saumarez Smith, Charles — '*Does this mean the end of the great galleries?'* ***The Observer*** *(*UK) Sunday, June 25 2006 *http://www.artsjournal.com/visualarts/redir/20060626-64714.htm* (3/7/2006)

Sayers, Andrew — ***Aboriginal Artists of the Nineteenth Century - A National Gallery of Australia Travelling Exhibition*** (Brochure published by the National Gallery of Australia 1994)

Sayers, Andrew — '*New Worlds From Old: 19th Century Australian and American Landscapes'* ***Look Magazine,*** Art Gallery of New South Wales, May 1998

Sayers, Andrew — ***Australian Art*** Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2001

Sayers, Andrew — '*Facing Facts'* ***Portrait.10,*** National Portrait Gallery, Summer 2003

Sayers, Andrew — *'Reflections on portraiture'* ***Portrait.13,*** National Portrait Gallery, Spring 2004

Sayers, Andrew, Grishin, Sasha & Brack, Helen — ***Portraits by John Brack*** National Portrait Gallery, Canberra 2007

Sayers, Andrew — *'Preface'* ***Portrait 36***, National Portrait Gallery, Winter 2010

Sayers, Andrew — *'The Considered Life'* ***Portrait 36***, National Portrait Gallery, Winter 2010

Scanlon, Joni — *'Art's New Look': The new National Portrait Gallery building provides the perfect platform to see art that reflects the Australian culture'* ***See Canberra: share the city you live in***, Summer 2008 (Canberra Times)

Schwartzkoff, Louise — '*Old songs inspire artist's cross-country walk'* ***The Sydney Morning Herald***, 18 September 2007

Schwartzkoff, Louise — *'A winning mother load of happiness'* ***The Sydney Morning Herald*** (Weekend Edition) 8-9 March 2008

Schwartzkoff, Louise *'Adversity brings success as self-portrait proves a winner'* ***The Sydney Morning Herald***, 3 October 2008

Schwartzkoff, Louise *'Portraits of painter pals as Archibald favourites'* ***The Sydney Morning Herald*** (Weekend Edition) 14-15 February 2009

Schwartzkoff, Louise *'Whacko, Flacco – he's the pick of the packers'* ***The Sydney Morning Herald*** 26 February 2009

Schwartzkoff, Louise *'So long, salon des refuses: ninth time lucky for artist'* ***The Sydney Morning Herald*** (Weekend Edition) 1-8 March 2009

Schwartzkoff, Louise *'Smashed rocker and dry land scoop art's richest prizes'* ***The Sydney Morning Herald*** 11 March 2009

Selinger-Morris, Samantha *'MCA boosts collection thanks to secret $400,000 donation'* ***The Sydney Morning Herald,*** 31 May 2005

Selinger-Morris Samantha *'The best of both worlds: Aboriginal art is as reflective of contemporary culture as it is of the past'* ***The Sydney Morning Herald*** (Weekend Edition) 9-10 October 2010

Sheehan, Paul *'Cultural whinge gets the gallery director's Irish up'* ***The Sydney Morning Herald***, 3 June 1999

Sinclair, Jenny *'Moving pictures enter the Archibald Prize'* ***The Sydney Morning Herald*** 9 March 2004

Skelly, Susan *'Nature's design'* ***The Sydney Morning Herald*** (Good Weekend) 14 August 2004

Slutzkin, Linda ***Bohemians in the Bush: The Artists Camps of Mosman*** - *Art Gallery of New South Wales 6th June to 25th August, 1991* (Brochure - Public Programmes AGNSW)

Smee, Sebastian *'Prize tag'* ***The Sydney Morning Herald*** 20 March 1999

Smee, Sebastian *'Painter put her soul into suburbia'* ***The Sydney Morning Herald***, 24 April 1999

Smith, Bernard ***The Critic as Advocate: Selected Essays 1948 – 1988*** Oxford University Press Australia1989

Smith, Deborah *'Face it – we've changed'* ***The Sydney Morning Herald*** (Weekend Edition) 7-8 January 2006

Smith, Geoffrey — *'Arthur Streeton: Exhibition Preview'* ***Look Magazine,*** Art Gallery of New South Wales, October 1996

Smith, Geoffrey — ***Sidney Nolan: Desert & Drought*** National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, 2003

Smith, Terry — *'Biennales in the conditions of contemporaneity'* ***Art & Australia***, Volume 42, Number 3 Autumn 2006

Somers-Cocks, Anna — *'Critics of Contemporary art called to arms'* ***Look Magazine***, Art Gallery of New South Wales, May 2001

Somerville, Jane & Sykes, Jill — *'Archibald Time: Season of Prizes and Surprises'* ***Look Magazine,*** Art Gallery of New South Wales, May 2007

Spalding, Julian — *'They shock too much'* ***Spiked Culture***, 23 July 2003

Sproull, Richard — *'After 40 years of giving, Max part of gallery's family'* ***The Australian***, 23 August 2006

Starr, Bala — *'Adventures in Painting: Compelling Themes in New Australian Art'* ***Look Magazine***, Art Gallery of New South Wales, November 2002

Stephens, Andrew — *'A Change of Subject'* ***The Age***, 19 July 2008

Stephen, Ann, McNamara, Andrew & Goad, Philip (Eds) — ***Modernism & Australia: Documents on Art. Design and Architecture 1917-1967*** The Miegunyah Press, Melbourne 2006

Sturgeon, Graeme — *'Perspecta 81: The 'been-there-done-that' of the new'* ***Art & Australia***, Volume 19 Number 3, Autumn 1982

Sutton, Candace — *'A naked grab for cash: Capon puts lord's gifts up for sale'* ***The Sun-Herald***, 18 May 2003

Sutton, Pollyanna — *'The Evolution of Portraiture: Australia's National Portrait Gallery'*, ***The Space Visual Arts: Australia's National Portrait Gallery*** - The Australian Broadcasting Corporation's Gateway to Arts and Culture http://www.abc.net.au/arts/visual/stories/s649655.htm (27/6/2003)

Sykes, Jill — *'Australian Art Now'* ***Look Magazine***, Art Gallery of New South Wales, June 2001

Sykes, Jill — *'Accessing Yiribana: We have a Readymade Project – Just Add Water'* ***Look Magazine***, Art Gallery of New South Wales, July 2002

Sykes, Jill — *'Weaving on Canvas: New Style in Aboriginal Art Emerges from Traditional Skills'* ***Look Magazine***, Art Gallery of New South Wales, August 2005

Sykes, Jill — *'The Archibald Already'* ***Look Magazine,*** Art Gallery of New South Wales, March 2006

Symons, Emma-Hate — *View on the Seine is Aboriginal* ***The Australian***, Friday September 9, 2005

Symonds, Wendy — *'6th Biennale of Sydney'* ***Look Magazine***, Art Gallery of New South Wales, May 1986

Symonds, Wendy — *'What is a Biennale?'* ***Look Magazine***, Art Gallery of New South Wales, May 1988

Symonds, Wendy — *'Aboriginal Art at the ANG'* ***Look Magazine,*** Art Gallery of New South Wales, August 1989

Symonds, Wendy — *'Four Artists: A Conversation with John Olsen'* ***Look Magazine,*** Art Gallery of New South Wales, November 1991

Stephens, Tony — *'Vaulting ambition – Why do we celebrate our athletes as high achievers but rail against our so-called cultural elites?'* ***The Sydney Morning Herald***, 14-15/08/2004

Szanto, Andras — *'Will US museums succeed in reinventing themselves? The recession is forcing North American institutions to reconsider every aspect of what they do.'* ***The Art Newspaper,*** Issue 209, January 2010 ***http://www.theartsnewspaper.com/articles***

Teo, Hsu Ming & White, Richard (Eds) — ***Cultural History in Australia*** UNSW Press Sydney 2003

Terry, Martin — *'Australian Landscape: Prints and Drawings'* ***Look Magazine,*** Art Gallery of New South Wales, July 1986

Thomas, Albie — *'Bohemians in the Bush: Sydney's first plein air painters'* ***Look Magazine,*** Art Gallery of New South Wales, June 1991

Thomas, Daniel — *'A Unique Gallery'* ***Art & Australia***, Volume 19 No. 1, Spring 1981

Thomas, Daniel — *'Australian Art'* ***Art & Australia*** Volume 20 Number 1 Spring 1982

Thomas, Daniel — *'Arthur Boyd 1920-1999: Was this Australia's greatest artist?'* ***The Sydney Morning Herald***, 26 April 1999

Thomas, Rebecca — *'Revealing a New Perspective –The Work of Art: Australian Women Writers and Artists'* ***Look Magazine***, Art Gallery of New South Wales, October 1995

Thomas, Sarah — *'The Portia Geach Memorial Award'* ***Look Magazine***, Art Gallery of New South Wales, September 1993

Thomas, Sarah — *'Expanse: Different Ways of Seeing Landscape'* ***Art & Australia*** Volume 36 Number 4 Winter 1999

Thompson, John — *'Creating a National Portrait Gallery'* ***Look Magazine,*** Art Gallery of New South Wales, April 1994

Thompson, Tom — *Celebrity Vs Cultural Significance* ***Look Magazine***, Art Gallery of New South Wales, February 2007

Tonkin, Steven — *'Portraits and personalities'* ***Artonview,*** National Gallery of Australia, Issue No.28 Summer 2001-2002

Tonkin, Steven — *'Radical Artists, Conservative Landscapes'* ***Artonview,*** National Gallery of Australia, Issue No.29 Autumn 2002

Topliss, Helen — *'The Great Australian Art Exhibition or Creating Australia'* ***Art & Australia***, Volume 26, No.3 1989

Tovey, Josephine — *Star gazers turn gallery into a shrine* ***The Sydney Morning Herald***, 2 April 2008

Trodd, Colin — *'The discipline of pleasure; or, how art history looks at the art museum'* ***Museum and Society***, March 2003 Vol 1 No 1

Tunncliffe, Wayne — *'Past/Present/Future: The Importnce of Collecting Contemporary Work and Contempo's Contribution'* ***Look Magazine***, Art Gallery of New South Wales, April 2003

Tunny, David — *'Hot Art at the Quay'* ***Look Magazine***, Art Gallery of New South Wales, October 1991

Turner, Graeme — ***National Fictions: Literature, Film and the Construction of the Australian Narrative***, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1994

Tunny, David — *'Upholding the Tradition',* **Look Magazine**, Art Gallery of New South Wales, August 1994

Turner, Caroline — *'Editorial: Tomorrow's Museums'* ***Humanities Research – Museums of the Future***, Part 1, Volume VIII No 1, 2001 http://www.anu.edu.au/hrc/publications/ht/issue1_2001/article01/html (23/10/2003)

Usher, Robin — *'Headline-making chief to quit gallery'* ***The Age***, 10 February 2004

Verghis, Sharon — *'Stink in the Tweed as Moran threatens to pull portrait prize'* ***The Sydney Morning Herald*** 26 March 2003

Verghis, Sharon — *'Not a pretty picture: another Moran relationship breaks down'* ***The Sydney Morning Herald,*** June 2003

Verghis, Sharon — *'Fear, loathing, malice: it must be the Archies'* ***The Sydney Morning Herald*** 8 March 2004

Verghis, Sharon — *'Finger-licking artistry at Archibald drive-in'* ***The Sydney Morning Herald*** (Weekend Edition) 13-14 March 2004

Verghis, Sharon — *'Face of a thousand generations takes out Archibald Prize'* ***The Sydney Morning Herald*** (Weekend Edition) 27-28 March 2004

Verghis, Sharon — *'Art gets off the canvas as prize fight end'* ***The Sydney Morning Herald*** 29 May 2004

Verghis, Sharon — *'How divorce was raised to a high art'* ***The Sydney Morning Herald*** 2 June 2004

Verghis, Sharon — *'Reputation restored in leaner frame* ***The Sydney Morning Herald***, July 2004

Verghis, Sharon — *'Lines are drawn for a prize fight'* ***The Sydney Morning Herald*** 23 July 2004

Waldman, Anna — *'The Archibald Prize'* ***Art & Australia*** Volume 20 Number 2, Summer 1982

Walker, Robert — ***Painters in the Australian Landscape*** Sydney: Hale & Ironmonger 1988

Wallace, Daphne — *'Yiribana Gallery Celebrates First Anniversary'* ***Look Magazine***, Art Gallery of New South Wales, November 1995

Wallace, Natasha — *'Art judges accused of drawing the wrong conclusion'* ***The Sydney Morning Herald,*** 30 May 2006

Wallace, Natasha — 'Hung, drawn and slaughtered: art dispute *gets the brush off*' ***The Sydney Morning Herald***, 15 June 2006

Wardell, Michael — *'The Moët & Chandon Touring Exhibition'* ***Look Magazine***, Art Gallery of New South Wales, July 1998

Warden, Ian — *'Artistic map of the Australian heart'* ***The Canberra Times***, *2 December 2000*

Watson, Bronwyn — *'Nolan boost: Three new works have strengthened the Gallery's Nolan collection'* ***Look Magazine***, Art Gallery of New South Wales, June 2001

Watson, Ken — '*Pumpuni Jilamamara (Good Design) The Tiwi Approach to Making Art'* ***Look Magazine,*** Art Gallery of New South Wales, April 2002

Webb, Jen — *'Negotiating Alterity: Indigenous and 'Outsider' art'* ***Third Text***, Volume 16, Issue 2, 2002, Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group (http://www.tandf.vo.uk/journals)

Webster, Simon — '*Why MCA? It's a people thing: Appreciation of modern art can require a flexible approach'* ***The Sun-Herald***, 29 July 2007

Whelan, Kate — *'Australian Aboriginal art in Paris'*, ***The Australian Art Market Report***, Issue 15, Autumn 2005

White, John — *'The Country Within'* ***Look Magazine***, Art Gallery of New South Wales, September 1999

White, Judith & Szczepaniak, Alenjandra — '*Archibald Fever'* ***Look Magazine,*** Art Gallery of New South Wales, March 1999

White, Judith — '*Jeffrey Smart: The Art of Composition'* ***Look Magazine,*** Art Gallery of New South Wales, August 1999

White, Judith — *'The country within'* ***Look Magazine***, Art Gallery of New South Wales, September 1999

White, Judith — '*An artist's homage' (interview with Barry Pearce)* ***Look Magazine,*** Art Gallery of New South Wales, February 2000

White, Judith — '*Olympians of Australian* ***Art'*** *(interview with Barry Pearce)* ***Look Magazine,*** Art Gallery of New South Wales, July 2000

Williams, Caleb — *'Beyond Good and Evil? The Taboo in the Contemporary Museum: Strategies for negotiation and representation'* ***Open Museum Journal*** Volume 4

Willis, Anne-Marie — ***Illusions of Identity: The Art of Nation*** Hale & Iremonger, Sydney, 1983

Wilmot, Eric — ***Australia: The Last Experiment*** (1986 Boyer Lectures) ABC Books, Sydney 1987

Wilson, Ashleigh — *'Educate collectors, protect the artists'* ***The Australian***, 7 April 2006

Wilson, Gavin — *'The Artists of Hill End: Art, Life and Landscape'* ***Look Magazine,*** Art Gallery of New South Wales, July 1995

Wilson, Gavin — *'Rivers + Rocks – Boyd and Whiteley: A River of Inspiration'* ***Look Magazine,*** Art Gallery of New South Wales, November 2001

Wilson, Gavin — *'The Big River Show: Roaming along the Murrumbidgee'* ***Look Magazine,*** Art Gallery of New South Wales, October 2003

Windshuttle, Keith — *'How Not to Run a Museum: People's History at the Postmodern Museum'* ***Quadrant*** No.379, Vol. XLV No. 9, September 2001

Wood, Gaby — *'Avant-garde for all'* ***The Guardian***, Sunday April 3, 2005

Woodford, James — *'Hunters and protectors: Aborigines argue it doesn't exist, a green critic says its about recreation. Even the Wilderness Society is rethinking the word. How did "wilderness" come to cause such offence?'* ***The Sydney Morning Herald***, Weekend Edition, 6-7 December 2003

Wyndham, Francis — *'The noble sport of portraiture'* ***Look Magazine,*** Art Gallery of New South Wales, March 2000

*'1988's Great Art Show'* ***Look Magazine,*** Art Gallery of New South Wales, December 1987

*'Angry Penguins in London'* ***Look Magazine***, Art Gallery of New South Wales, August 1988

*'Archibald, Wynne and Sulman Prizes – 1995'* ***Look Magazine***, *Art Gallery of New South Wales, April 1995*

*'Archibald, Wynne & Sulman Prizes'* ***Look Magazine***. *Art Gallery of New South Wales, March 1997*

*'Tom Roberts Exhibition'*
***Look Magazine,*** Art Gallery of New South Wales, April 1997

*'Preview - Art for 2000'*
***Look Magazine,*** Art Gallery of New South Wales, November 1999

*'Let's Face it'* ***Look Magazine,*** Art Gallery of New South Wales, February 1999

*'Prizetime: The Archibald, Wynne and Sulman exhibitions are upon us, and each has a character all of its own'*
***Look Magazine,*** Art Gallery of New South Wales, April 1999

*'Global Vision (Sydney Biennale 2000)'*
***Look Magazine***, Art Gallery of New South Wales, June 2000

*'On Reason and Imagination: A Biennale to make us think and feel'*
***Look Magazine***, Art Gallery of New South Wales, May 2004

*'Art of the Unexpected: The Biennale strikes again'*
***Look Magazine***, Art Gallery of New South Wales, June 2004

*'Spreading the culture: from desert rockholes to the bank of the Seine'*
***Look Magazine***, Art Gallery of New South Wales, April 2005

*'On a human scale'* ***Portrait.19,*** National Portrait Gallery, Autumn 2006

***Creating Australia: 200 Years of Art 1788-1988*** *(Exhibition publication/Catalogue) Art Gallery of South Australia, 1988*

***Federation: Australian Art and Society 1901-2001*** *(Exhibition publication/Catalogue)* National Gallery of Australia, 2000

***Australian Icons: Twenty artists from the Collection*** (Exhibition publication/Catalogue) Art Gallery of New South Wales, 2000

***CrossingCountry: The Alchemy of Western Arnhem Land Art – A Festival of Aboriginal Art***, Art Gallery of New South Wales, 28 September – 12 December 2004 (Exhibition publication/brochure)

***Clifford Possum Tjapaltjarri*** (Education Kit) Art Gallery of New South Wales, 2004
***Culture Warriors – National Indigenous Art Triennial07*** *(Exhibition publication/ Catalogue)* National Gallery of Australia, 2007

*'The 2002 Biennale of Sydney: (The World may Be) Fantastic'* ***The Space Visual Arts: The Biennale of Sydney*** (ABC online –The Australian Broadcasting Corporation's Gateway to Arts and Culture)

*'What is Museology?'* The Centre for Museology (University of Manchester)
http://www.art.man.ac.uk/museology/what_is/what_is_museology.htm
(21/08/2004)

*Masterful Images'* ***Wentworth Courier*** 6 August 2003

***Portia Geach Memorial Award 2003***
(Catalogue/Brochure) National Trust S.H. Ervin Gallery

*'Archibald rejects get mass appeal'*
***Herald Sun*** *(Melbourne)* 10 December 2003

*'A director painted into a corner'*
***The Sydney Morning Herald****, 11 February 2004*

*'Backroom boys go for the big girl's blouse'*
***The Sydney Morning Herald*** 19 March 2004

*'Smiles all round for gallery boss'*
***The Sydney Morning Herald***, 1 September 2004

The Festival of Sydney and David Jones Limited present ***"PRIVATE TREASURES" An Exhibition of Art from Australian Private Collectors Covering a Period of Five Centuries*** (organised by Mervyn Horton) David Jones Art Gallery, January 10-21 1978

***Fred Williams: The Pilbara Series*** *(A National Gallery of Victoria Touring Exhibition)*
*http://www.ngv.vic.gov.au/pilbaratour/*

***Wildness: examines the legacy of Olegas Truchanas and Peter Dombrovskis, two of Australia's greatest wilderness photographers***
Written and directed by Scott Millwood
Produced by Michael McMahon
Film Australia 2003 (http://www.filmaust.com.au)

*'Jeffrey Smart'* An essay by John McDonald - Philip Bacon Galleries: Artist Profile
http://www.philipbacon.com.au/artists/JeffreySmart/extract.html (5 August 2004)

***...such fertile ground...The earth as both inspiration and canvas. 14 artists and 12 regional Victorian communities have created the ultimate tribute to the land, its history and peoples.***
http://www.abc.net.au/arts/fertile/default.htm (24 July 2003)

***Seeing the Landscape: Summary*** (Guests: Andrew Sayers and Ian North)
http://www.abc.net.au/rn/arts/sunmorn/stories/s879226.htm (24 July 2004)

***Arts feature: 500 Fridays*** (Producer: Marianne Latham) April 27, 2003

http://sunday.ninemsn.com.au/sunday/includes/fetchcontent.asp?purl=/sunday/art_pro (28th August 2003)

***Mandy Martin: The Power of the Landscape***
http://www.abc.net.au/arts/visual/stories/s649657.htm (27 July 2003)

***Peter Coad: Paintings for the film THE TRACKER***
http://www.abc.net.au/arts/visual/stories/s658895.htm (27 June 2003)

***'Spirit Country' Ground Painting***
***The Space Visual Arts: The Australian Broadcasting Corporation's Gateway to Arts and Culture*** http://www.abc/net.au/arts/visual/stories/s459832.htm

***Celebrating Australia: identity by design***
http://ww.powerhousemuseum.com/previouse/celebrating_australia.asp (9/09/2004)

***Sublime: 25 years of the Westfarmers Collection*** (Helen Carroll, Art Gallery of Western Australia, 2 October to 25 November 2002)
http://www.artgallery.wa.gov.au/x_sublime_intro.htm (1 October 2004)

***Howard Arkley Profile***, 7 December, 1997
**Reporter:** Max Cullen/**Producer:** Marianne Latham
http://sunday.ninemsn.com.au/sunday/includes/fetchcontent.asp?purl=/sunday/art_pro (28 August 2003)

***7.30 Report***, *Michele Fonseca interviews Jinx Nolan, Geoffrey Smith (National Gallery of Victoria, Barry Pearce (Art Gallery of New South Wales)* 4 June 2003 (ABC Online – transcript) http://www.abc.net.au/7.30/content/2003/s872275.htm (6 June 2003)

***Streeton paintings to tour western Queensland, 20 July 2004, ABC News Online***
http://www.abc.net.au/news/newsitems/200407/s1157564.html (28 July 2004)

***Marlon Dalton on the Archibald Art Prize***
**Presenter:** Peter Gunders (***ABC New England North West NSW***) 7 March 2003

***The Evolution of Portraiture: Australia's National Portrait Gallery***
***The Space Visual Arts: Australia's National Portrait Gallery***
***ABC Online: The Australian Broadcasting Corporation's Gateway to Arts and Culture*** 27 June 2003

***The Archibald Prize***
**Reporter:** Max Cullen/**Producer:** Catherine Hunter
***Sunday*** 19 March 2000

*The National Portrait Gallery*
**Producer:** Catherine Hunter
*Sunday* 28 March 1999

*Ruddy wins Archibald with Gulpilil portrait*
*The Age* (Melbourne) 26 March 2004

*Artist challenges Archibald win*
*The Advertiser* (Adelaide) 14 May 2004

*Jana Wendt portrait wins packers' prize*
*ABC News Online* 18 March 2004

*Ruddy takes out Archibald with Gulpilil*
*ABC News Online* 26 March 2004

*Artist launched Archibald challenge*
*ABC News Online* 13 May 2004

*Proof - Portraits From The Movement 1978-2003*
Public Relations and Marketing @ Macquarie University
1 April 2004

*Report on the Administration of the Northern Territory for the Year Ending 30gh June, 1946*
(Department of Native Affairs) held by the National Library of Australia

*The Australian Portrait Collection*
*Tweed River Regional Art Gallery*
http://www.tweed.nse.gov.au/artgallery/moran/portrait.htm 17 June 2004

*Gabrielle Pizzi*
http://www.gabriellepizzi.com.au/pages/gabr.html (20/05/04)

*Art Gallery of NSW – About Us*
http://www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au/aboutus/index.php4? (`3/07/01)

*Hogarth Galleries Aboriginal Art Centres*
http://www.aboriginalartcentres.com (5/08/2004)

*Episode 5 National Portrait Gallery*
*Dimensions_in_time – 22/7/2002: National Portrait Gallery*
17 August 2004

*Federation: Australian Art and Society 1901-2001*
*Michael Cathcart interviews Bruce James*
http://www.abc.net.au/rn/atoday/stories/s222202.htm

***Facing Australia: The National Photographic Portrait Project***
*http://www.facingaustralia.com/content/about/html*

***Sites of Communication Symposium*** (NGV International), 7 & 8 September 2007

- ***'Art and Audience'*** Associate Professor Ruth Rentschler, Executive Director, Centre for Leisure Management Research, Deakin University
- ***'Dichotomy: Risk & Tradition'*** Lynn Seer, Assistant Director of Curatorial & Collections Development, Queensland Art Gallery

***Rebirth of the Museum – An International Symposium*** (8 & 9 July 2004)
Convened by Chris Healy, Gaye Sculthorpe and Paul Walker, supported by the Australia Research Council, the Faculty of Arts and the Department of English with Cultural Studies, The University of Melbourne.

***Interview with Katrina Lumley***, Curator, Newcastle Region Art Gallery, Newcastle, N.S.W. 19 April 2004

***Interview with Diana Harrison***, Assistant Director, The Salamanca Collection, Hobart, Tasmania, 11 April 2005

***Interview with Euan Hills***, Director of **ARTMOB** Aboriginal Fine Art, Hobart, Tasmania 12 April 2005

***Interview with Sue Backhouse***, Curator of Art, Tasmanian Museum, and Art Gallery, Hobart, Tasmania, 12 April 2005

***Interview with Jane Stewart***, Director of Devonport Regional Gallery, Devonport, Tasmania, 13 April 2005

---